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IN SEVENTEEN PRISONS

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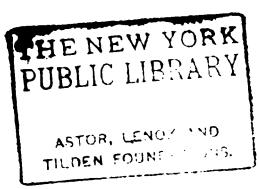
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'You must take everything off,' said the senior warder.—Page 195

[*Frontispiece*

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN SEVENTEEN PRISONS

The Life-Story of an Ex-Convict

WITH HIS IMPRESSIONS OF OUR PRISON SYSTEM

By 'No. 7'

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK WRIGHT

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Twenty-five Years in Seventeen Prisons

CHAPTER I

Of the twenty-five years during which I have been immured in a kind of living grave, by far the greater portion has been spent in one or other of H.M.'s convict prisons; but as it was in a local gaol —the usual stepping-stone to the superior penal establishments—that I gained my first experience of the inner life of a prison, I shall begin my narrative by a reference to what was then considered one of the best conducted of gaols—the old Liverpudlian prison at Walton.

As some may like to know the circumstances under which a young man of highly respectable parents, and who had had a fair education, first found his way into the dock of a police-court, I shall just state here how it came about, in the hope that my life-story may be a warning to other young fellows who are often tempted to do wrong in a precisely similar way.

Owing to the sudden death of my father, and the consequent break-up of the old home and dispersion

of the family, I, after a brief stay in London, went to Liverpool in the hope of obtaining employment in a large mercantile office. I was advised to put up at the house of a most amiable Roman Catholic family named Maguire, who had accommodation for a young man. Being disappointed in not finding the hoped-for opening in the office of Birden and Co., of Dale Street, I wandered about the streets of Liverpool for quite a month without finding anything better than the post of messenger in a large foundry, where I could get but eighteen shillings per week, which, of course, I took up at once.

I worked very hard at this foundry for twelve hours daily, and the only thing in the way of pleasure or recreation which I had for fully six months was the company of one of my landlord's daughters, a very intelligent and pretty girl about eighteen years of age. Between Norah Maguire and myself a mutually warm attachment soon sprang up, and I would willingly have done or suffered anything for that girl's sake. Unfortunately, my small wage —three-fourths of which had to go to her mother weekly—did not allow me to make any presents to my sweetheart, or even to take her to a place of amusement now and again, as I saw so many other young men doing, almost nightly, with their sweethearts.

This was a fruitful source of regret to me, and I felt it all the more keenly because of the fact that Norah had another admirer, who was earning more money than I, and could, therefore, take her about a bit.

One day this young fellow—whose name was Calvin—promised to take Miss Maguire to the Theatre Royal to see Mr. Boucicault in an Irish drama which he was then playing, and Norah, in common with many more, was very anxious to see it. I confess that I was very jealous of Calvin, and I made up my mind that I would take her to see the play myself. I fancy she liked me the better although she often used to go for a stroll with him. Anyhow, when I told her that I intended taking her to see this piece—the 'Shaughraun'—she said she would rather go with me than with him.

But here was the place where the shoe pinched. It was necessary, before I could fulfil my promise, to raise the wind somehow, and on the very next morning, as I was in charge of the foundry, some man who owed my employer £2 came in and paid his bill. I was in real distress of mind at the time as to how I was to get the needful funds, and here came the temptation, which I could not resist.

Truly 'The sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done.'

This was just what happened to me on that morning. The sight of those two golden sovereigns, which I felt could purchase so much pleasure for Norah and myself—for my greatest pleasure then was to please her—overcame all other feelings, and, for the first time in my life, I acted dishonestly.

To be sure, since I gave the man a receipt in my own name, I knew that the thing must be found out sooner or later. But I had an intention of paying it into the firm before a month should elapse, and I

argued myself into the belief that I should be able to do so.

Well, we went to the theatre, and, of course, Norah had the best that I could give her. She enjoyed the play immensely, but I must say that I had never felt so unhappy in my life before. Although I pretended to take a great interest in the play, it was only to keep up appearances before her, and I could not now describe a single scene in that piece for the life of me. My mind, indeed, was not upon the stage at all, and when I brought Norah home and bade her good-night, she noticed that there was something wrong, and asked me what was the matter with me. Of course, I could not tell her, and my refusal to do so greatly upset her, so that, after all, when we parted that night, the pair of us felt miserable.

We were far more miserable next day, when my employer, learning about the bill having been paid, and finding that it was not entered in the ledger, gave me into custody for stealing the money.

There was no First Offenders' Act in those days, and having pleaded 'Guilty' to the charge, the stipendiary magistrate sent me to prison for six weeks.

I have no desire to pose as a teacher of mankind, but in view of what I have just related and of what followed, I would implore all young men to take a warning from this my life-story, and, above all things, to *resist* the *first* temptation to dishonest courses which may come along. The effects of this first slip of mine are felt to this day—although thirty years have passed since I made it!

Norah Maguire and her mother were in the court when I was sentenced, but although both were anxious to speak to me, and obtained the magistrate's sanction to have a private interview before I was sent to the prison, I was so thoroughly ashamed of the whole thing that I could not face them, and was taken away to Walton Gaol without as much as saying good-bye to the girl I loved. Oh, the memory of that crushing event is as fresh in my mind to-day as it was when I left that police-court thirty years ago!

But I must now proceed to relate what is, after all, the main purpose of this work—my prison experiences.

On leaving the court, I was placed with a number of other prisoners in the 'van'—a similar vehicle to that now seen daily passing through the streets, loaded with life tragedies; and on the road to Walton Gaol I met the first of a long series of remarkable prisoners with whom it is not, thank heaven! given to every man to rub shoulders.

This man's name was Thomas A——, and he hailed from 'Wapping Old Stairs.' A burglar 'by profession,' he had evidently been engaged in some of England's 'little wars,' notably that known as the Zulu Campaign. I believe that this man dearly loved a Zulu, and his conduct prior to, during, and subsequent to the journey from the police-court to the prison plainly indicated a more than sentimental leaning towards the ways of the African savages.

Anyhow, he had comported himself in such sort on landing at Liverpool that he was sentenced to

two terms of six months' imprisonment, and no doubt he richly deserved the punishment. It transpired, on the journey to Walton, that Thomas had already been imprisoned for very long terms, and, to a man of his experience, twelve months' additional incarceration was a very small matter.

He intended, however, to make a big thing of it, and by giving as much trouble to the prison authorities as he could, leave his mark on the annals of Walton Gaol.

We were jogging along at a nice easy pace towards the common goal, when Thomas suddenly electrified the passengers in the prison van by lifting up his voice on high, and proclaiming allegiance to that dusky potentate Chetawayo, under whose banner, he declared, he was going to live and die.

Although the nerves of discipline are properly relaxed during transit from court-house to prison, or from one prison to another, and the officer leading the escort allows, as a rule, a certain latitude of expression from prisoners *en route* to 'Quad Strass,' Thomas became so boisterous and demonstrative that the warder in charge had to interpose and attempt to suppress the effervescence of this very noisy fire-eater. He was forbearance itself, but I have often noticed—in a prison or out of it—that it is the characteristic of some men to mistake forbearance for weakness, and to consider inaction to be a symptom of fear.

Thomas would make himself heard, and, alas! felt. When the warder had exhausted his stock of patience and, in the general interest, felt constrained

to put the 'darbies' on his man, he received a blow on the nose from this violent disciple of 'King Chetawayo,' which sent him staggering from one end of the carriage to the other. Happily none of us had the least sympathy with the aggressor. On the contrary, when we saw the warder stretched on his back in the coach, a general rush was made at Thomas, who was speedily flung to the floor and bound with such bandages as the occupants of the van could supply.

On arriving at Walton Gaol, the whole party was split up, and I found myself in a tiny cell in which a gas-jet, attached to a long strip of lead-piping, was emitting a very dismal ray of light—barely enough to enable one to trace the outlines of surrounding objects. I at once set to work to make a mental inventory of the contents of the cell, but before I had completed my survey the cell-door was opened, and a man was flung head first into the compartment. I am sorry to say that this man was none other than our friend Thomas.

His entrée was made in very rough style indeed, and the impact of flesh and blood on brick and mortar seemed at first sight ruinous to the former. But Thomas was made of stern stuff—something which defied collisions—and ere I could grasp the actual situation Thomas was up on his feet and was tugging away with might and main at the gas-piping!

In two minutes the long length of now flaming lead was down on the floor, the gas, meanwhile, blazing away from three or four different orifices. For the moment I thought that I was about to be

roasted alive, and not knowing what else to do, kicked vigorously at the cell door to attract the attention of the warders, for at times those gentlemen have an awkward knack of 'slinging a deaf-un' to the ordinary mode of inviting their notice.

Whilst I was kicking, Thomas diverted himself by dancing around the blazing piping, and, like Nero at Rome, made merry over the flames. The only thing I could get out of him was this:

'I am a Zulu! Zulu best man. Three cheers for Booloowayo!'

In his frenzy Thomas confounded the person Chetawayo with the place Buluwayo, and no amount of eloquence on my part could bring him to a right persuasion in this connection.

I was really afraid that the pair of us would be smothered or roasted ere help came, and I tried to reason matters out with him in the vain hope of pacifying him pending the arrival of the officers; but the flames spoke more persuasively to Thomas than I could, and, when the wooden seat at the end of the cell became ignited and the place was—in the language of our impeached Metropolitan Fire Brigade—'well alight,' he danced (like the raving maniac in the play) all around it, knocking me over several times in his gyrations.

A really good uproar is, however, very effective at times in quelling disturbances in a prison—paradoxical as that may sound—and between the hubbub within the cell, my kicking at the door, and the smoke, which soon began to force its way out of the cell, the noise was so great that a crowd of warders

Thomas diverted himself by dancing round the blazing piping

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came rushing in and delivered me from this inferno.

Thomas must have had a taint of the salamander in his composition, as he stoutly refused to quit the burning building, and it was not until the gas had been turned off, and the fire-engine began to pour in streams of water, that he was at length overpowered and carried off to the punishment-cells.

I am pleased to be able to state that I never saw Thomas more. He was, I heard later, sent to a lunatic asylum, the place to which he should have been sent in the first instance.

It was whilst 'doing' this six weeks at Walton that I had my first taste of the 'cruel' element, which then, much more than now, was the distinguishing characteristic of our penal economy. Two men (father and son) were undergoing six months' imprisonment on a charge of larceny. The elder prisoner was a hale, hearty old chap when sentenced; but on seeing him a month later I was struck by the altered appearance of the man. He had become thin and aged, and bore a haggard and care-worn air about him—well he might.

In the interval two of his younger children had died, and the wife, to whom he had been married thirty years, was stricken down with grief, and only survived the death of her children three weeks. When the son heard of his mother's death, he became insane, and, although I believe that every possible care was taken of him by the authorities, he eventually committed suicide.

But notwithstanding the fact that four members

of his family had died since his sentence, and that he himself was visibly fading away, not a day of that sentence was remitted, and the old man eventually succumbed to the accumulated weight of his misfortunes, and died in a fit, I believe, of apoplexy.

To be sure, there is this to be said about this sad history, both father and son were very reticent, and as they were convicted under different names, the authorities may not have known all the facts. Indeed, it is probable that they were ignorant of the connection between the men. I have no reason to think that the medical officer, who, as in all prisons, had the power of making such representations to the Home Office as would have led to the old man's release, had wilfully ignored the case. It is more probable that it was not so. But still, the fact remains that both wife and children had died, and yet the poor old man was not allowed to see or attend the funeral of any one of them!

Beyond the consciousness of my position and the cellular confinement, which was, of course, very trying to one who endured it for the first time, the only unpleasant associations lingering in my mind in connection with this first term of imprisonment refer to the sufferings which I saw around me, and the seeming duration of the term. That six weeks was the longest six weeks I had ever known, and, when at last it came to an end, and I passed out of the prison gate, everything seemed so strange and uncanny that I might, like Rip van Winkle, have been asleep for the past hundred years.

If I had been asleep, I soon experienced a very

rude awakening. Everyone I met in the streets after my release seemed to look askance at me, and I soon began to feel that, in a social sense at least, I had become something very different from what I was before.

I have a very vivid recollection of one little scene which occurred on my applying for a situation shortly after my discharge from Walton. When I saw the employer, he looked at me for a moment with a funny little twinkle in his eye, as of one who knows a great deal more than he cares to say. Could this man have heard of my case? Or mayhap he was a 'clairvoyant,' and could read through me! Such were my thoughts while standing before him in his office. The longer I stood there, the clearer it became to me that this stranger knew all about me, and so strong did this delusive feeling become that I hastily picked up my hat and ran out of the office!

However, 'Nothing comes of nothing.' Work of some kind became an absolute necessity, and I had to set my face like flint against all hostile feelings, real or imaginary.

As it is rather with my prison life and observations than with my private and social existence that I have to deal in this work, I shall now 'shoot the gulf' between the beginning of June, 1872, and the middle of the following year, when I again found myself under lock and key at H.M.'s prison Strangeways, Manchester, under sentence of penal servitued for an offence of which I shall have something to say in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

AMONGST the friends of my youth was a young fellow named Robertson. He had been introduced to me by my brother, whose school-chum he was, and it was to this very sociable young fellow that I owed my subsequent downfall.

Briefly stated, the facts are these. On my release from Walton I went to Manchester, and finding no other kind of employment, I took up a canvassing job for a general agent named Mr. Burton, of Market Street. Among the things which I had to solicit orders for was an endorsing stamp, then rather popular with professional gentlemen, and as I sallied forth one morning on my round, young Robertson came to pay me a flying visit, and would insist upon accompanying me.

My district that day was Old Trafford, and one of my first calls was at the house of a medical gentleman named Wilkins or Wilkinson. As this gentleman was out at the time, the maid to whom I handed my card invited me to take a seat in the doctor's consulting-room, which was situated on the first floor, and here, accordingly, Robertson and I took up our position to await the doctor's return. Half an hour passed, and still we waited. About the end

of that time Robertson, who had some kind of gland ailment, found it necessary to leave the room. It chanced, however, that on leaving the consulting-room where I was then reading the morning paper, he caught sight of a lavatory on the next landing, and, saying that he would not be a tick, he closed the door, and I saw no more of him. Presently the maid opened the door, and, looking round, asked where my friend was. I replied that he had had occasion to go out and I expected him back in a minute or two.

Those words had scarcely been uttered ere the hall-door was opened, and the doctor, accompanied by his wife, came on the scene. A few hurried words passed between the maid and her mistress at the bottom of the stairs, and next moment the doctor entered the room. But before I could explain the object of my visit the lady entered and exclaimed:

'Charles, we have been robbed! My jewels are stolen, and that man has them in his bag!'

It can easily be understood that I felt so flabbergasted at this announcement that I cannot for the life of me recall what I then said. All I know is that I at once repudiated all knowledge of the robbery, and invited an immediate inspection of my bag, which contained my samples only. Meanwhile the maid had called in a policeman, and I was taken to Old Trafford station and there searched. As nothing was found upon me connecting me with the robbery, the superintendent (Mr. Bent) declined to take the charge of larceny preferred by the policeman, but informed me that I should be detained

until the arrest of the man (Robertson) who accompanied me.

Even up to that moment I had no idea that there was any truth in the report of the servant that she had seen my friend leave her mistress's bedroom. Still, I felt that, come what might of it, the man must be found, and although I did not know his address in England, I knew that his father was in business in Glasgow or Edinburgh, and that my own brother would be the one to hunt him up, as he knew more about him than I did. Accordingly, I gave the police all the information I could, wired for my brother, who arrived next day, and the hunt after the fugitive was taken up with vigour.

Before a week had passed my brother obtained a clue, and three days later Robertson was run to earth in a gipsy caravanserie somewhere in the country, and was brought back to Manchester.

The sequel is soon told. The police traced the stolen property to a pawnbroker's shop, and Robertson was identified as the man who had pledged them. But as my brother and myself had been instrumental in having him arrested, he turned rusty, and said that I should have to go through it with him. I was absolutely in his power, and although as innocent of the crime as an unborn babe, I was committed for trial on the absurd charge of house-breaking, and Recorder Higgins of Salford (who was then experimenting—say, rather, manufacturing criminals—by imposing long sentences) condemned me to a punishment to *which death would* have been preferable—'Seven

years' penal servitude, and seven years' police supervision !'

I have undergone that punishment, and it does not now matter two straws to me what people may say about my subsequent history, which was the outcome of that event. But I here, on this 8th of October, 1902, once more repeat what I have over and over again stated, that, although I have committed myself deeply since, God knows that I was guiltless of the offence for which I was first sent into penal servitude on the seventh day of the seventh month, in the year 1873.

Here is the account of my experiences on that fateful day — may our Father forgive the man who then blighted my life by making me what I am to-day, a social outcast.

I was led down from the Assize Court at Manchester to the cells underneath that building, and when I had recovered somewhat from the shock given to a naturally sensitive mind by what was admitted on all hands to be an excessively severe sentence, I found myself sitting on a low table, with my head in my hands, vainly striving to bolster up my mind with the illusive hope that my case would be taken up by the press, and a reconsideration of the case made imperative.

Ah, the poor delusive fancy ! Ah, the wretched make-believe !

Within three hours of that maddening moment I was led with thirteen other prisoners (all under sentence of penal servitude) to the county gaol, situated at the rear of the courts, where I was

ordered to strip off all clothing, etc., sent into a long, stony corridor fitted up with cells on each side, and subjected to a bodily scrutiny which can only be described by a man of my somewhat delicate instincts as most degrading and inhuman. The indecent exposure in the presence of two prison officials inseparably connected with this 'search' process is one of those things which I am afraid the authorities do not even yet grasp the full significance of. I wish it were otherwise.

I was not detained at Manchester more than a month, when an order came to remove a batch of convicts to London, and after an uneventful ride from London Road to Euston, I was, in the company of nine other prisoners, brought to the 'Model Prison,' as Pentonville was then called.

CHAPTER III

PENTONVILLE CONVICT PRISON has (since the old Clerkenwell Gaol, Cold Bath Fields, was closed to make way for G.P.O. purposes) dwindled to the status of a mere local gaol; but prior to this new arrangement it was the great emporium into which all male prisoners sentenced to penal servitude were poured from all parts of the country.

Here it was that all such convicts—except members of the Roman Catholic Church, who were always sent to Millbank Prison—passed, or were supposed to pass, the first nine months of such sentences, by way, I suppose, of 'breaking them in.'

One who held the position of 'cleaner' of the executive offices, and who, by virtue of that position, could go about at his own sweet will, could always manage to get into touch with almost any inmate of the establishment if he desired to do so, and we had some remarkable inmates.

I not only desired, but made up my mind to do so from the first, and although there was something of the Paul Pry order in my search after remarkable criminals, they were willing to be interviewed—anything is welcome which breaks the horrible monotony of the cell life—and most of them knew

that there was a 'chiel among them taking notes,' with the fullest intention of printing them.

Now, the chief actors in the 'Turf Frauds,' which resulted in three men being sent to penal servitude for long terms, were among those who were informed that, one day or other, they might find themselves embalmed in printer's ink and accorded a niche in the criminal Walhalla of the country. The principal sinner (B.) was wholly indifferent to posthumous fame, but his youngest colleague (H.) was of a different way of thinking, and longed for his apotheosis. I am now going to gratify his ambition by reporting the story of my interview with him, a story, by the way, which has been told before, no man daring to question its accuracy.

It was summer-time, and wherever one turned buckets of whitewash were in evidence. What the ornaments of our households call the annual 'spring-cleaning' was in full swing, and a small army of convicts, in white overalls, were to be seen flitting about like so many spectres. Among those thus engaged was a tall, thin, pleasant-featured young man, verging towards his majority, and this youthful criminal evinced a great desire to be on good terms with everybody, especially with the cleaner. Of course, as I figured in that capacity, I came in for a tidy share of this young gentleman's patronage, and having ulterior objects in view, I encouraged this interesting and talkative young man, whenever he desired any private conversation.

One day, as I was superintending the whitewash-

ing business in my own *locale*, he opened the ball in this wise :

'Are you a betting man ?'

'No,' I replied. 'Never bet a penny in my life.'

'Oh ! You wouldn't know anything about the ring, then ?'

'What ring ?'

'Why, the enclosures.'

'What enclosures ?'

'My G—— ! Ain't you soft ?'

'Well, I may be soft, but I have never taken any interest in sporting matters ; and, besides, I have never been rich enough to go in for betting.'

'Rich ? Why, that's the way to become rich. More money is made on the turf than in any other line of business known to me.'

'I am afraid we could not agree on that point, as my observations lead me to believe that betting has ruined more men than any other occupation I have ever heard or read of.'

'Don't you believe it. B. has made a thousand in one day.'

'Well, suppose he has done so. Where is he now ?'

'Ah well, of course, you must take your chance, you know !'

'Chance ! When a fellow's chances result in ten or fifteen years' penal servitude, I fancy they can't be up to much.'

'But look at what he has made. He is a rich man to-day, and can afford to throw money away.'

'Can he ? I *certainly* envy him his happiness,

if that is the case. But do you think he *is* happy? Are you happy?'

'Yes. As happy as the day is long.'

'What! In here?'

'Ay! As happy as you are, and perhaps a lot more so, although you *are* going out in a month or two.'

'Well, old boy, your idea of happiness does not quite accord with mine. I don't know a more unhappy state of being than that we are now in, and if you will look at things fairly and squarely I think you will come to the same conclusion.'

'Rot!'

'Well, it may be rot, but I don't think so, and, after all, we are only dealing in opinions. Let us come to facts. What are you here for?'

'My brother is a fool, that's why we are here. But the charge was one of defrauding Madame de G. through betting transactions in which she herself was engaged. B. worked the wires and I helped him; but my brother took to courting instead of to business, and the whole thing went to smash. That's the worst of having anything to do with a fool.'

'How much did you do the old lady out of?'

'Oh, not much—when you consider her oof.'

'Will she be able to recover any of it, or have you spent the lot?'

'I don't think she'll get much. B. is too smart for that, and if it hadn't been for my brother she wouldn't get a sou——'

The conversation had just reached this stage when

Cerberus, who had been watching us from the top landing all the while, suddenly exclaimed:

'Now then, No. 18, you have been talking all the morning. Don't let me catch you at it again.'

Thus the only interview I ever had with this wily and unscrupulous *chevalier d'industrie* ended, and although the one I had later with his brother (the fool) was not half so lengthy, it threw much more light on the great Turf Frauds.

It is pitiable to think that men of such calibre as the leader of this gang should, I don't say have committed those frauds (since a castigation from me would be equivalent to the case of Bartimæus cudgelling another blind man), but have gloried in them. Yet this is what the whole gang appears to have done.

Indeed, nothing is more common, when a number of convicts get together at work, than to find even men of a superior stamp taking a positive pleasure in the recital of actions or events which they would shrink from giving publicity to on the other side of the prison wall. One such man was Dr. V., a native of Derbyshire, who was undergoing penal servitude for performing illegal operations, and who did not blush to acknowledge that he thus killed more than half a dozen women. I was talking to this wholesale murderer one day, when my attention was attracted to a very quiet and gentlemanly little prisoner, who had only joined the 'party' on the previous day. As he appeared to be isolated and of sad visage, I spoke a few cheering words to him,

with the result that we were soon deep in conversation.

His colloquial style, and, indeed, whole bearing seemed to indicate something very far above the average convict, and I listened to his remarks with pleasure for awhile. On general topics he was well posted up, and this made me all the more anxious to extract an expression of opinion on the subject of crime and criminals. He had 'never studied the subject,' he said. He was a lawyer, and an erstwhile member of Gray's Inn, and when I put the matter to him plainly he gave me the history of his crime, which was one of defrauding a ward in chancery.

I shall have something to say in another part of the book about the head of the Balfour group, the victimizer of thousands. But the chief actor in the Liberator swindle—colossal though his crime was—never once boasted of his achievements. On the contrary, I believe Mr. Balfour to have felt the losses he inflicted on others more keenly than the fourteen years' penal servitude which he is still working out in Parkhurst Prison.

How very different was the case of the lawyer to whom I have just referred! Passive and almost philosophical upon every other subject, he no sooner entered on a rehearsal of his exploits in the swindling way than he became full of vivacity and enthusiasm, speaking in the heroic vein when describing the artful ingenuity which he had shown, not in a commendable or even excusable undertaking—as *he had already a good* practice, and was making

money fast — but in robbing a young girl of her all!

I have no manner of faith in excessive severity when dealing with criminals, but if ever such severities are justifiable, it is surely in the cases of those who, having a competency, lay themselves out to rob helpless women and children, and who then go about chanting the hymn of triumph, as though they had done some great thing.

CHAPTER IV

SIDNEY SMITH was, no doubt, a fairly reliable authority on many things, but his views on the science of penology do not carry much weight now-a-days. It is true that there is still much 'weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth' behind all prison walls, but, after a quarter of a century's experience of prison life, I can truthfully say that, although the tragic element predominates, the comic is ever in evidence.

We had an ex-Captain of Dragoons in Millbank Prison, who was the greatest oddity I have ever clapped eyes upon in a prison or out of it. He was undergoing five years' penal servitude for a series of robberies, which he was under no necessity whatever to perpetrate, as he was on half-pay, and, to boot, the lucky possessor of considerable private means. Being an educated man, the Captain was employed in the 'printers' shop'—all prison work, such as printing and book-binding, was then done in the old penitentiary on the banks of the Thames—and I worked by his side for nearly two years at that establishment.

For a long time complaints were made by various *prisoners that little* odds and ends, such as a comb,

a scrap of soap, or a button, had mysteriously disappeared from their cells or work-bench, and suspicion being directed against a young fellow whom we called 'Autolycus' (as he was known to be a snatcher-up of unconsidered trifles), a careful watch was kept upon him for at least six months.

One very foggy evening in January, as the printers were groping their way to their respective cells, the warder in charge saw a slim figure glide out of the ranks and disappear into a cell on the landing. Believing that he had at length bowled out the long-suspected Autolycus, he made a dash for the cell into which the slim figure had entered, and, closing the door behind him, he found himself face to face with—the Captain!

Of course, an inquiry was held next day, and as a result a hypercritical examination of the Captain's cell and working quarters was made. Never before had I seen such a miscellaneous collection of rubbish unearthed as was then brought to light. Bits of soap, which must, as they were as hard as the hob, have been quite a year old, small balls of paper, dirty rags, nails, broken teeth of combs, and an assortment of ancient buttons—some of which must have been raked up from the soil—were all on exhibition, a perfect museum of worthless trash, in the governor's office for two days.

To punish a man who was clearly a kleptomaniac seemed hard, but something had to be done, as vagaries of this kind could not be overlooked. Wherefore the Captain expiated his offence in 'chokee' (*i.e.*, the punishment cells), where, I regret

to say, his ruling passion got the better of him again, and he stole a scrap of putty, which he by some means contrived to scrape away from the cell-window!

In later years I tumbled across an American convict who always reminded me of the eccentric Captain of Dragoons. This man was under a ten years' sentence for an offence which I could never understand, and certainly shall not attempt to describe. Protesting his innocence, as he did, all along the line, he would not acknowledge the right of the Home Office to detain him. From first to last he insisted upon being sent to the States (although the alleged offence was committed in England), and would have it that he was the victim of a 'gross miscarriage of justice.'

A more litigious man was not in the prison than this Mr. M., and although the higher officials, believing him to be a 'crack-pot,' treated him with consideration and even tenderness, they could not reconcile him to his fate, charm they never so wisely. When, in the ordinary course of things, he became entitled to any privilege, provided by the rules and regulations, he would not avail himself of it, maintaining that to do so would imply his acquiescence in the justness of his sentence.

I saw him on a very raw winter's morning walking about the parade-ground in his shirt-sleeves. He refused to put on his jacket, as on the previous evening it had been decorated with a badge, always attached to a prisoner's sleeve when he is promoted *from a lower to a higher* stage. This performance

was ridiculous enough, but he carried his absurdities much further on another occasion, when he positively refused to eat or drink the prison fare prescribed by the rules. Fancying that hunger would eventually effect a change from this humour, he was allowed a long length of rope; but when a week had passed and he still steadily declined to touch, taste, or handle his diet, the medical officer took him in hand, and managed to keep him alive by the use of the stomach-pump.

M.'s *chef-d'œuvre*, in the tactical way, was his resolve to bring an action against H.M. Principal Secretary of State for false imprisonment, for every hour of which he intended to claim 2s. 6d. As the man was undergoing a ten years' sentence, and had forfeited, by his absurd conduct, all the remission of that sentence which he might otherwise have earned, the actual number of hours for which he claimed compensation was 87,600; and at his own estimate of 2s. 6d. per hour he expected to get the modest little sum of £10,950 on his release from prison—something in the nature of a 'large order.'

That our rigorous penal economy produces annually a rich crop of insanity is, I think, a postulate few who know anything about the subject will care to dispute; but if many convicts are mad, a large proportion exhibit considerable method in their madness. One such scientific lunatic was an elderly gentleman who loomed large in the eighties on the Stock Exchange. Somehow or other this venerable scion of a wealthy and honourable family over-reached himself, and got into deep water. In

company with a barrister, he was sent to penal servitude, and worked out his time in Millbank. Through his solicitor he was enabled to enjoy some of the 'pleasures of the table' while in 'Quad Strass'; but when he desired a change from the monotony of the cellular life, he made a point of gorging himself with good things to such an extent that the inevitable reaction laid him low, and he had to be taken to the prison hospital. He was generally looked upon as a crank, but however that may have been, I seldom knew a prisoner have a better time of it throughout his whole sentence; and he capped his performances by making as picturesque and imposing an exit from duress as was ever witnessed, read, or heard of.

Previous to his conviction he was about to be married to a lady who was his junior by thirty years and the heiress to a fortune. The fact of his criminality did not impair the lady's affection in the least, and, indeed, from letters which he showed me, I gathered that, as time went by, her attachment to this supposed crank became stronger. Anyhow, on the evening previous to his release, a large portmanteau containing a complete outfit arrived at the prison, and about 9 a.m. next morning a carriage drawn by two beautiful greys dashed up to the prison gate, and the bride-elect met her future husband with open arms on the very threshold of that grim old penitentiary. Within two hours of leaving those prison gates this remarkable pair were married at St. Margaret's Church, and the man who rose from *a plank-bed in the* morning slept in a luxurious

apartment on board one of the P. and O. steamers, *en route* to India, that same night.

One would like to close the scene at this point; but I am writing history, not fiction, and I am obliged to state that the young wife died in Madras two years later, and the broken-hearted old man, taking to drink, fell back into crime, and was again sent to Millbank Prison under another term of penal servitude.

Perhaps the most remarkable convict I met in those days was the 'King of Burglars,' as Charles Peace was called. A false and misleading halo has been spun round the head of this unscrupulous but daring desperado. When I saw him at Pentonville for the first time I did not know who or what he was, but a certain sly, crafty air was about the man which perhaps unjustly biassed one's mind against him. I have told the story of our brief interview in another place, and need not repeat it here; but one may say that the magnanimity with which he has been credited in connection with the man Habron is purely imaginary. I do not suppose that Peace cared two straws about the man at whose trial and conviction upon a trumped-up charge he is said to have been present. It suited his purpose to make that much-talked-of confession which gave Habron his freedom—*plus* £1,000 compensation—and cost himself nothing. I have no doubt whatever but that Peace would have taken his own life if Marwood had not done the job for him.

A far more interesting convict than Charles Peace was *the Irish* politico-military offender, John

O'Brien, who, with Colour-Sergeant McCarthy, was sentenced to penal servitude for life by a military tribunal for a military offence which, nowadays, would be considered as a very minor one indeed, but who was treated, from first to last, as though he had been a common felon.

On arriving at Chatham Prison, I heard that the political prisoners were not treated very well, and, desiring to get my information at first-hand—perhaps also because one wished to see and converse with such a *rara avis* as 'a political'—I worked the ropes, so that I was in a short time transferred to the working party or gang in which O'Brien was employed. Both prisoners were always kept apart, and, except in a clandestine way, could never converse with each other.

When I first saw O'Brien he was loaded with chains and rigged out in a parti-coloured dress, the result, I believe, of an abortive attempt to escape from 'the slaughter house,' as Chatham Prison was then called. He was sitting upon a stone, and not a single man of the party—eighteen in number—seemed to take the slightest notice of him. He was a canary in a cage filled with sparrows! It is the usual experience of all superior men in a prison to be boycotted by the rag, tag, and bob-tail of the establishment; and although a man sociably inclined may feel his isolation keenly at times, it is a good thing that it is so, as he is thereby protected from the contaminating influences ever operating *in a gang* of ordinary convicts, where the law of *'kind' makes birds* of a feather flock together.

I was rather diffident at first in approaching this man, as I did not like to be thought obtrusive. But my curiosity to know all about him got the better of me, and, placing my hand upon his shoulder, I asked if I might speak to him. Lifting up his head, which was then buried in his hands, he smiled and said:

'Certainly. But what do you want to speak to me about? I am not very popular hereabouts, and you might get into trouble if you were found talking to me.'

'Oh,' said I, 'it does not matter a bit if I do get into trouble. I can't be in much greater trouble than I am in at present, and I should so much like to become acquainted with you.'

'Very well. I noticed you when you joined the party this morning, and I wondered whether you were like the rest of them. I see you are not, and I shall be glad to have a chat with you. But we are going to work now, and shall be here again this afternoon for twenty minutes, when we can have a few words together quietly. Where are you located?'

'I hear that I am going to "A" hall, and I think the number of the cell is 17.'

'I do hope it may be so, as then you will be next door to me, and we can have many chats together on the quiet. The man who was in that cell was admitted to the hospital yesterday, and I was glad to get rid of him, as he was a most unpleasant neighbour.'

'Well, I hope you will find a neighbour now who is more to your taste. In any case, I shall be more than *pleased if they* put me next door to you.'

'I think they must do so, as there is no other cell vacant on the landing.'

He was quite right. That very evening I was installed in No. 17 cell, and O'Brien heard the bustle created by my entrance and subsequent examination of my new abode.

When the officer left the cell, and I was free to take my bearings, a slight scratching of the corrugated-iron partition which divided one cell from the other attracted my attention to a small orifice made in the wall nearest to the door, and, though it was no larger than a small-sized pea, O'Brien and I went in for a good, old-fashioned gossip of about two hours' duration.

It was then that, for the first time, I learned the whole story of the riot at the Royal Barracks in Dublin, and all that it led to, and throughout the whole night my brain was reeking with visions of military parades, revolutionary declarations, court-martials, and men in irons.

I met O'Brien's comrade later on, in the tailors' shop, and found him to be a very inoffensive kind of man, but, like O'Brien himself, overcharged with an irrational hostility to England.

When, some years afterwards, I picked up a paper, and read the account of McCarthy's sudden death on a public platform in Ireland, and remembered all that he and his comrade had gone through whilst in Chatham Convict Prison, I could not evade the conclusion—subsequently arrived at by a high tribunal—that the administration of Chatham Prison was not an ideal one.

CHAPTER V

ONE of the most cultured and yet impracticable convicts I have ever met was a certain gourmand named Bertrand D'Aurey, who was eternally in trouble whilst at Chatham.

As the name implies, Bertrand was a Frenchman; but he was something more than a Frenchman—he was a French artist, and, like all such, a *bon homme* who dearly loved a good dinner. Now, Bertrand was doing ten years' penal servitude for having 'done' some unfortunate German out of £1,000—probably by way of recouping himself for his outlay in connection with the great war indemnity which that 'Prince of Darkness,' Bismark, had imposed on 'La Belle France.' Anyhow, when Bertrand was, in due course, sent to Chatham Prison, his insinuating manners and profuse liberality carried him through many a scrape, and, for a considerable time, he lived in the lap of luxury.

But the official Nemesis overtook him one day, and he was run into 'chokee' for having one or two bank-notes sewed up in the covering of his mattress. How the notes got into the prison was never discovered; but Bertrand had long been suspected of carrying on an illegal commerce with the outside

world, and as any rope is good enough to hang a dog with, the mere discovery of the notes in his cell was sufficient to convict him of trafficking. At all events, it afforded good presumptive evidence of his guilt, and the poor gourmand was sentenced to twenty days on bread-and-water diet, besides other pains and penalties.

It is a refinement of cruelty to strike at a gourmand through his stomach, and I fancy that Bertrand would have preferred the rack or thumbscrew to this systematic deprivation of victuals for twenty mortal days. Oh, it was the quintessence of torture!

When seven days had passed—during which he had received only sixteen ounces of bread *per diem* —Bertrand began to manifest symptoms of despair. The one thing in life he pined after was some solid material to put between his upper and lower mandibles. Food he wanted, and food—of some sort—he was determined to have.

I had it from himself later on that he, first of all, tried to gnaw the table; then, finding it too hard, he went for the stool, but this article of furniture was equally tough, and his dental department was not superexcellent. When he had tried a piece of tin-ware, and made some headway with a scrap of filthy gutta-percha, which he had bitten out of a cell utensil, and which nearly poisoned him, a bright idea flashed across his mind. The soles of his shoes were made of a species of leather, and we all know that 'there is nothing like leather.' When *Bertrand's cell was* opened next morning, he went

in for his shoes—always placed outside the punishment cells nightly before locking up—and by dinner-time had all but devoured them!

Since that date (1876) the law regulating the diet allowed to prisoners under punishment for prison offences has been modified, so that a man under a sentence of twenty days' bread-and-water (technically known as 'No. 1 punishment diet') is allowed the full prison rations every fourth day during the said sentence, three *consecutive* days being now the maximum period for which bread and water only can be given for any prison offence. But there are, of course, other kinds of punishment, which may be enumerated here.

1. The loss of 'class privileges'—*i.e.*, writing letters, receiving visits, possessing library books, etc.

2. The forfeiture of 'remission-marks,' which may involve any additional imprisonment, from one day to three months for each offence committed.

3. Flogging.

A mawkish sentimentalism lifts up its foolish head now-a-days in protest against the use of that very necessary deterrent, the 'cat,' or, rather, the 'birch.' But why do penal 'heathens' so furiously rage, and, in their ignorance of known facts, 'imagine a vain thing'? No convict prison in the country could be governed for a week were flogging abolished.

Quite recently a brutal attack was made upon a comparatively inoffensive warder by a prisoner, who did not hesitate to use a chopper. Our *soi-disant* 'humanitarians' would hesitate to use the 'cat' on the dastardly ruffian who perpetrated the

crime, and, so thoroughly has this cant of the 'humanitarian' debilitated the masculine, good, sound, common-sense of the country that this brute is allowed to escape the castigation he deserves, and gets off with the nominal punishment of 'a dozen strokes with the birch'—a small schoolboy's allowance, truly!

Apropos of brutal outrages in our convict prisons, let me here cite a few which came under my own personal observation.

I was one day at work in the brick-fields at Chatham, where part of our daily duty was the baking of the raw clay—previously moulded and cut into brick form—in a furnace, which was always kept alight and at a temperature of something like melting-point. There were two men in that labour gang who were constantly at war with each other, and one often wondered why they were not separated, as they were a ceaseless source of trouble to the warder in charge of the party, and of danger to other prisoners obliged to work with them. Upon the day in question both of these men seemed to be in a highly pugnacious mood, and the language made use of by them was of such a character as makes it unfit for publication.

I did not at the time understand the *casus belli*, but heard later on that one accused the other of having 'put him away' (*i.e.*, informed the authorities) over some tobacco—in prison parlance 'snout'—which had been going the round of the party, and which, of course, was a saleable article, always *fetching a high* price.

The older, stronger, and more villainous of the two men seized his opponent, and . . . flung him into the brick-kiln

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Words—terrible words—ran high, and, to give the officer in charge of the party his due, every effort was made to pacify the disputants. It was all to no purpose. Those fire-eaters intended having a row, and they had it. When their stock of abusive epithets was exhausted, they took to fisticuffs, and, as both were big and powerful men, we had some fine 'exhibition boxing' for a few minutes.

Suddenly, however, the natural ferocity of the combatants gained the ascendency, and, instead of fair fighting, each had recourse to foul play. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the warder blew the whistle which, like a policeman, every prison officer is furnished with by the powers that be, and carries in his tunic.

But long before any effectual help arrived the climax was reached. The older, stronger, and more villainous of the two men seized his opponent, and, by a tremendous effort, flung him into the brick-kiln, from which he was fished out only after prodigious exertions, and in a state of complete collapse.

Within two months of that occurrence an officer was attacked by a prisoner, who, coming up behind him, stealthily felled him to the ground by striking him on the head with a spade. The unfortunate warder was not in any sense of the word a tyrant, but he had occasion to report this prisoner for misconduct, and because he had thus done his duty fell a victim to the savage ferocity of a convict whom the namby-pamby 'philanthropist' would invest with a license to murder.

A young man whom I knew very well, and who

was, moreover, well connected, but had got into trouble through an inordinate love of finery—a failing which, next to gambling, is the curse of modern youths—was one day accosted by a coarse-minded butcher, then under sentence of seven years' penal servitude for an infamous offence, who made certain filthy proposals to him. Young H. recoiled from the beast with disgust, and next day sought an interview with the governor, with the view of being transferred to another gang. Before the interview could be had, the foul-minded ex-butcher—who was then employed in the shoemakers' shop—managed to smuggle a sharp-pointed knife into his cell (which was situated within a few paces of the one occupied by young H.), and when the cell-doors were opened on the following morning to allow the inmates to attend divine service in the chapel, the cowardly scoundrel stole up behind his intended victim and inflicted a terrible gash with the sharp instrument on the left side of the neck, just missing the jugular vein. Poor H. narrowly escaped being murdered outright. He has been disfigured for life, and will carry the visible evidence of that murderous attack to his grave.

Savage assaults of this kind are of frequent occurrence in all convict prisons, and I have often noticed that when the assailant is flogged or birched he howls vociferously, showing that the triangle—all prisoners are strapped to a triangle whenever corporal punishment is inflicted—is the only argument which carries weight with such offenders.

I shall have to relate some tragic experiences

gained in convict prisons later on, but lest further details of such scenes here should unduly depress my readers, let me close this chapter by giving a brief account of what I thought at the time was a rather unique occurrence—I allude to a kind of 'symposium,' formed for educational purposes by three prisoners, who were anxious to make the best use of the very many leisure hours enjoyed (or endured) by all convicts.

Those three men, whose names, for obvious reasons, I suppress, were all working in a gang which consisted of eighteen men, the majority of whom may be described, in Carlylian phraseology, as 'mostly fools.'

But the fool and the rogue are often closely allied, and in that particular party the roguish element certainly predominated. Curses, both loud and deep, thickly larded the so-called 'conversation' in which this precious assemblage of sinners hourly indulged without let or hindrance.

Small causes, however, often lead to great results, and the three men to whom I have alluded, disgusted with the staple topic of the day—to wit, the respective stomachical capacities of the 'conversationalist'—put their heads together, and, entering into a kind of offensive and defensive alliance, resolved to purify the moral atmosphere by sitting upon all impure or vulgar discussions, and endeavouring to introduce a higher tone into the ordinary colloquial intercourse between man and man.

Had the authorities supported, or even understood, *this elevating* movement, much more satis-

factory results than I am able to record might have been produced. Unfortunately, the authorities did *not* enter into the spirit of the thing—nay, they set their backs up against it—and whilst rascaldom was suffered to have its own way, this honest effort of three brave men to stem the tide of immorality, and to lift their fellow-sinners to a higher plain was tabooed, and the embryo reformers were split up and sent to different parts of the prison.

Thank God, where there is a will there is generally a way! and although forcibly separated, those three men—a trinity of which any institution might be proud—so arranged matters that their influence was felt beyond the range of operations possible to any other combination in the prison. Of course, they had to pay for the power they were enabled to exercise, and, often enough, they had to pay 'through the nose' for it. But, then, they were *willing* to pay, and the man who has the power and the will to pay for whatsoever he covets in this world can ever attain his object. 'Pay, pay, pay!' is the standing order of our whole social economy.

Unable to meet personally, they secured the service of a cleaner, and although they had to mortgage their dinners by the transaction, they were enabled to secure constant intercommunication, with the result that, although apart, they always acted in unison. By letters, by messages, and by personal contact with those whom they desired to influence, they pegged away, in season and out of season, to propagate their views, and although each was in turn reported and punished for running amuck

against the constitution of the establishment, they never, from the day they opened their campaign against filthy language to the day each was discharged from prison, abandoned their enterprise or even relaxed their efforts.

Truly, 'no man is a prophet in his own country or among his own people,' and I regret to say that the most bitter enemies which those embryo reformers had were the very men for whose benefit they worked so assiduously and endured so much loss! They met with opposition from all sides, and as for abuse—well, if hard words could kill, the whole three would have died in prison. They did not, however, die in prison, but, having worked out their sentence, were released in the ordinary way, and—oh, the perversity of all things!—it was *then*, and not till then, that the men's real characters were understood and their efforts appreciated.

I cannot pretend to measure the benefits conferred upon society by this 'symposium'; but I knew more than one prisoner who acknowledged that they had gained very much by their society, and I know also that when the trio had gone from the prison their absence was regretted by two high officials, although when carrying out their self-appointed programme within the prison they received more kicks than ha'pence from those very gentlemen.

CHAPTER VI

No one nowadays cares to undertake the task of whitewashing an Ethiopian. It is an ungrateful job, and never has been done with complete satisfaction, either to the Ethiopian or to the whitewasher.

But dropping the metaphorical and sticking to the literal truth, I have always felt that when a man, having committed himself criminally—from any cause whatever—has suffered the penalty prescribed by law, and has thus purged his offence, it is an act of the grossest injustice and cruelty to not only dog his footsteps (as is often the case even now), but to rake up the memory of the old, expiated offence and punish him again for it.

Yet this is precisely what is done in England every day. On leaving Chatham Prison I was sent up to Pentonville as a 'good conduct man,' and was put into the best job in the prison—that of cleaner in the governor's and chaplain's offices. Here I had ample opportunities of gleaning much valuable information—official and non-official—as to the process through which a discharged convict had to go.

Of course, as I was then under my first term of *penal servitude,* I had no personal experience of the

hardships imposed upon men who had paid their debt to the law, and were theoretically supposed to have wiped out their offence. Wherefore I am, in dealing with this early period, dependent upon the testimony of those who had gone through it, and with whom I was brought into contact prior to my own release. One has now too much reason to know that the tales of sorrow and misery which I heard from many in Pentonville were substantially true.

'B 2, 14' was an Ethiopian in the social sense, and far be it from me to attempt to change his colour. But let us hear what this man had to say in explanation of his *second* sentence of penal servitude:

'It's all werry well for people as don't know 'ow a feller is put on be the bloomin' tecks to say a man must never thieve, but wot are he to do? Wen I were chucked (*i.e.*, released) I were straight enough and meant to keep so. But—blow me!—wen I had spent the three quid they gave me, and couldn't get no work, I found the splits (detectives) on me bloomin' track everywhere I went; and the society bloke would do nuffin' for me. Well, I were like that for more nor three weeks, and the old 'oman an' I put away all our clogger (clothes) to buy grub, which, o' course, you must 'ave, or 'ow're you gon' to live? Wen everyfing were gon', an' the bloomin' lan'lord 'eard as 'ow I were a hex-convict, he gives us notice, an' I 'ad to find another room for the missus—an' I without a farthin'! Wot were I to do? Why, if you must 'av a fing an' you can't get it honest-like, you must thieve. I didn't do much

neither—only pinched two pair of boots, an' I get five stretch (years) for it.'

Five 'stretch' seems a rather stiff punishment for 'pinching' two pairs of boots; but I have seen men undergoing *seven* years for 'pinching' one pair! —a punishment out of all proportion to the offence.

The foregoing narrative may not adorn the tale, but it clearly enough points the moral, which is simply this: under the old regimen, as well as, in a lesser degree, under the new, an ex-convict who desires to mend his ways and do the thing that is lawful and right is more heavily handicapped than any other man struggling to live; and if he goes to the wall, it is often solely because any other man in like circumstances would and must also go to the wall. It is no disgrace to any man that he is not a god, and, *certes*, nothing less than superhuman powers are necessary at times to keep an ex-criminal from relapsing into crime, so great is the pressure placed upon him.

This fact cannot be better exemplified than by referring to the cases of W. W. and R. S., both of whom were undergoing the same term of penal servitude, but who, in consequence of the difference in their social rank, had quite opposite experiences on being liberated from Pentonville. W. had been employed in a humble capacity when he got into trouble, and on his release he endured the usual fate of ex-convicts without money or friends. The R.S.A.D.P. could or would not find him employment, and after six months of privations, the least *of which was that* he was foodless for nearly a week,

he again committed himself, and was once more sent back to penal servitude. At that time to have been in penal servitude once was considered as a good *a priori* reason why one should be sent there again. Indeed, on my second appearance before the learned recorder of Manchester, that gentleman in passing sentence upon me made use of these words :

'You have been in penal servitude before, therefore you must go back to penal servitude again—for five years !'

But to revert to the cases of W. and S. The former, as we have seen, was 'knocked out' by the irresistible logic of hard facts, and fell into crime. The latter, who had wealthy connections to take him by the hand on his discharge from prison, never afterwards returned to that abode of the socially damned. Originally employed at the War Office in a position of considerable responsibility, he availed himself of that position to sell important secret information to one of the London 'dailies,' and was punished by being sent to penal servitude for five years. On his release, after three years and nine months, he was practically exempted from the then usual police regulations, was furnished with ample means by his family, and sent abroad, where he subsequently—his nest having been feathered for him by others—lay on a bed of roses for the rest of his days. *Verbum sap.*

My own fate was very different indeed, and although I had relatives living in Manchester—the fateful city to which I was sent back by the authori-

ties on my discharge from Pentonville—I had no one who was capable of giving me a helping hand. To be sure, I joined the Manchester branch of the Prisoners' Aid Society, and received the £5 odd which was due to me, but beyond that I never received a penny, nor could the secretary obtain suitable employment for me, although he was willing enough to do so. The consequence was that, on regaining my freedom, I walked about the streets of Cottonopolis for months in a state of wretchedness which the active mind alone can form a just estimate of.

After trying my 'prentice hand at various kinds of canvassing, without realizing enough to support myself—not to speak of a widowed mother, a younger brother, and an invalid sister—I took up a new patent in the endorsing-stamp way, upon obtaining orders for which, and dealing direct with the manufacturers (a Birmingham firm), I thought I could make a decent living. Beginning with one or two small orders, I soon extended my sphere of operations, and prospered beyond my own sanguine expectations.

Alas! it was this very success as a canvasser which ultimately involved me in difficulties, and placed me once more in the meshes of the criminal law, with all that it then meant to an ex-convict.

It was a condition of business with the Birmingham house referred to that all goods supplied by them should be paid for on delivery, and to meet this condition one day, when a consignment of *goods worth* more than £10 to me was to be made,

£6 was needed to pay the bill, and I had but one post-office order for thirty shillings at my command. What was to be done ?

Of course, I know now what *should* have been done, as it is not justifiable to do evil even because we think that good may come of it. But one in my then position seldom reasons—he does not even think, but only feels. I felt, above all things, the necessity of obtaining £6 to pay for goods which would not have been delivered unless they were paid for, and on the possession of which my own and my family's comfort—nay, sustenance—then depended.

I altered my post-office order—in a very clumsy way, to be sure, as I had never done anything in that way before—from £1 10s. to £10 10s., and obtained an advance of the needful £6 upon it.

That was on a Saturday afternoon. By noon on the following Monday I had been paid for all my goods, and, with £4 to the good, I returned to the tradesman who had advanced the £6, to return that sum and recover the post-office order.

I had barely entered his shop for this purpose ere I was arrested by two detectives—who were concealed in the shop parlour with that object—taken to the Town Hall, where, as a ticket-of-leave man I was, of course, well known to the police—and charged with obtaining £6 by means of a forged post-office order. It was on being sent before the recorder for trial on this charge that the words quoted above were uttered from the bench :

'You have been in penal servitude before, and

therefore you must go back to penal servitude again —for five years.'

From the city court-house to the city gaol is not a very great distance, and I was soon under lock and key in that great northern stronghold, Belle Vue Gaol, going thither in the very same van—so I afterwards heard—in which, some time before, the ill-starred police sergeant (Brett) was shot dead by some of the gang of Fenians who were just then 'playing up a bit,' the result being the execution of Allen, Larken, and O'Brien, the so-called 'Manchester martyrs.'

A prisoner under sentence of penal servitude was but rarely detained long in a local prison. I was detained in Belle Vue only a month, but that was long enough to disgust me with the place, as this was the only time I was ever required to mount the 'everlasting staircase,' and I was such an awkward hand at it—there is an art in working the tread-mill —that I got into trouble more than once during that month.

To be sure, a month is a mere fly-blow when one has five years' imprisonment in prospect, but, speaking from experience, I would much prefer passing six months in any convict prison to spending one at Belle Vue Gaol. There were fourteen men committed from the same sessions at which I was sentenced, and every mother's son of them was sent into penal servitude for terms ranging from five to twenty years.

I am not going to describe the routine in vogue at the Manchester City Prison, as there was a strong

family likeness between it and another equally inhospitable mansion to which I shall refer in another chapter. One thing, however, I must say concerning Belle Vue. We have recently heard much as to the verminous condition of the cells at Holloway Prison, London, and from experience, to be detailed later on, I can testify that the published reports have rather understated than overstated the facts.

To the credit of the authorities at Belle Vue Gaol it should be stated that everything was kept scrupulously clean. In other gaols one has not only been at the mercy of the tiniest and most sanguinary of all insects, but one has had blackbeetles and other unsightly vermin served up in one's soup and porridge. I one day fished up from my tin of beef soup what I at first thought was a fragment of the genuine *bos*, but what, on critical examination, I found to be the hind-quarters of a mouse!

The Manchester City Prison was, however, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion, not only in the culinary, but in every other department; and as one desires, above all things, to represent what one has experienced in its true colours, we must pay this passing tribute to Belle Vue—it was one of the cleanest prisons I was ever confined in.

At the expiration of one calendar month I was transferred from Manchester to London, and found myself once more within the whitewashed walls of Pentonville. Of course, I was at once recognised by the officials, and many very uncomplimentary remarks were made by men who knew nothing whatever of the circumstances which sent me there,

but whose habit it is to greet every returned convict with such profound observations as the following :

'What ! Here again ? I knew you couldn't keep out. What have you got this time ?' etc.

I knew that it was useless to bandy words with a class of men who, brought up in a barrack-room, and pitch-forked into a little brief authority in the Civil Service, were incapable of viewing things fairly and squarely, and ere I had been in Pentonville for a week I learned the lesson which has been uppermost in my mind ever since : when in 'Quad Strass' never gainsay or contradict anything, however absurd, which a warder may enunciate. Prison officials are not to be beaten.

It was while undergoing this second 'probationary' term at the 'Model Prison' that I met Benson and his two accomplices in the great 'Turf Frauds.' The story of Madame de Goncourt and her connection with the three fraudulent conspirators, who were subsequently sent to Pentonville under long sentences, is too well known to need repeating here. It is not, however, so generally known that each of those three men had a prison history which might be read with interest. Here I will only say that, of the 10,000 and odd criminals with whom I have rubbed shoulders during my prison life, I have not known more than two who, for cool audacity and indomitable perseverance, in whatever enterprise they might be engaged upon, could 'hold a candle,' as the saying goes, to the two brothers R. and their chief.

Without giving the story of my interview with

perhaps the most daring and the most reckless of this notorious trio, I wish to note here the changes in the administration of Pentonville about this time, as they were 'symptomatic of much.' Besides some minor officials, I noticed a change in the *personnel* of the higher executive department, and the most remarkable thing about those changes was that the governor himself had suddenly disappeared.

I have had many surprises in my time, but never before had I experienced anything like the amazement felt when, as we were sitting in the chapel one morning, I saw the tall, slim, and active figure of the old governor of Chatham Prison (Major F.) enter from a side-door, and, mounting the reading-desk, proceed to deliver a speech to the criminal congregation!

The Major had long reigned in the 'slaughter-house' without ever condescending to address the prisoners publicly. His rule was autocratic in the extreme while at Chatham, as it had been when governing the serfs on the banks of the Ganges—or was it the Indus?—but now he mounted the reading-desk, and, raising his hand in deprecation of the hostile hum with which his sudden advent was greeted, explained that he had been appointed governor of Pentonville—was it a 'drop' from Chatham?—and intended to administer the prison rules impartially but firmly. Had a prisoner any grievance? Let him come to the new governor, but 'let no man presume to take the law into his own hands.'

As we filed out of the chapel on that morning

the vision of Colour-Sergeant McCarthy dropping dead on a public platform within a few days of his release from Chatham Prison haunted my mind, and, rightly or wrongly, I connected the removal of Major F. from Chatham to Pentonville with that tragic event.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER being nine months at Pentonville, I was transferred to Portland, where by far the most interesting prisoner I met was Mr. Davitt, who had been, a short time previously, sent back—as a ticket-of-leave man—in consequence of the part he took in the political agitation of the time.

I had heard Mr. Simpson, of Liverpool fame, address a meeting of the relics of the old Chartist organization in a temperance coffee-house in that town. On that occasion one or two fire-brands vented their 'views' in a manner which would have surprised some of those who were instrumental in sending Mr. Davitt back to penal servitude. One inflated explosive, in describing the scenes which eventuated in what was known as 'the Peterloo Massacre,' closed the door of the room in which the meeting was held, and which was surrounded by police, who held warrants for the arrest of the noisy demagogues inside.

Placing his ample back against the panels of the door, this boisterous son of Adam declared that he would hold that door against all comers, and rather than not pass the resolution (whatever it was) proposed to the meeting, he would fight all and sundry

till 'the tyrants' bell should ring him to the anvil!'

Well, knowing that this 'inflated explosive' was never once brought to book for his fiery ebullitions, but was, instead, promoted to great honour and glory, the first thought that suggested itself to me on seeing Mr. Davitt rigged out in a felon's dress in Portland Prison was that a mistake had been made, and I asked myself the question: 'What has *this* man done?'

Whatever he had done or said—and perhaps Mr. Davitt said a great deal more than he did or ever meant to do—when taken to Portland he was located in the hospital, and, except during religious service in the Roman Catholic chapel, or on an occasional collision with the 'cleaners,' he was not required to associate with ordinary prisoners, but spent his time mainly in his cell reading or writing. He was subject to the same rules and regulations which all other prisoners were subject to, although he enjoyed certain privileges not accorded to other prisoners.

It was whilst he was indulging in one of these special privileges that I first saw him. The common form of exercise in all prisons (convict or local) is that of walking round a narrow, circular path. Such exercise lasts an hour, except in the case of those who, being in the first or second 'stage'—a term which more accurately describes the divisions of prisoners than that of 'class'—are allowed two or three periods of exercise daily.

As I was entering the hospital gate one afternoon

I met a warder and a prisoner coming out, and I noticed that one of the sleeves of the prisoner's jacket (left one) hung loosely, showing that the wearer had but one arm. Looking from the arm to the face, I at once recognised the expressive countenance of Mr. Michael Davitt, and for three or four minutes I stopped on the threshold of the infirmary gazing after him and wondering where he was being led to.

My visit to the infirmary did not last more than twenty minutes, as the object of it was the simple one of having a tooth extracted. On leaving I thought that I felt a lump of clay alight on my head, and on looking up to see whence it came, I saw Mr. Davitt, his jacket off and sleeve pinned up, pegging away with a spade, which he deftly used to turn over the soil by placing one foot on the blade and holding the handle with his only hand. I had been accustomed to see agriculturalists at work, but Mr. Davitt was the first one-handed man I had ever seen so employed, and I watched him admiringly as long as the officer then in charge of me would suffer me to stand there.

On another occasion I chanced to be in the ward in which Mr. Davitt was located, and although one could seldom see him, I heard a good deal of gossip going on about him. With the exception of one warder—who, by the way, was generally considered to be a kind of ogre—all the officials spoke well of Mr. Davitt, and, indeed, from what I know of that gentleman, I don't well see how they could do otherwise. Prison officials, like other folk, can appreciate

to a certain extent an honest man when they know him, and although the majority neither cared for nor, indeed, understood his politics, he was a general favourite amongst the officials, with the single exception of the 'ogre' aforementioned, whose favour was not worth considering.

My sphere of observation was very limited at Portland—more so, indeed, than at any other station—and this, coupled with the fact that I was seldom free from neuralgia whilst there, led me to apply for a transfer to Millbank Prison, where I hoped to complete my education as a compositor, and at the same time be freed from the excruciating agony which I was a martyr to at Chatham and Portland—I allude to the neuralgia fiend. I suppose that a 'spoon diet,' such as all our prisons afford, is not favourable to the well-being of one's dental department. Anyhow, I was seldom free from toothache; and it is one of those complaints for which very little sympathy is ever shown or felt.

'If you have a bad tooth,' said a fellow-convict to me one day, 'you must get it out;' and this is exactly what I had to do, until I found that removal of the teeth did not always mean removal of the pain, and I drew the line at the forceps—not, however, until I had parted company with three-fourths of a set of teeth which were often the objects of admiration previous to my acquaintance with H.M. prisons.

Whether it was owing to sympathy for my pain, a willingness to enable me to learn the Caxtonian art more perfectly, or a desire to get rid of me, I wot

not, but I was, without any preliminary notice whatever, taken off one fine morning to the boat which plies between Portland and Weymouth, and, before I learned the fact officially, was on my way to Millbank Prison.

I am now about to enter on a new, and, from a public point of view, perhaps the most interesting phase of my prison experience. But before commencing a fresh chapter I desire to pay a passing tribute to the chaplain's department at Portland.

Of what is generally called the 'religious' functions of the then chaplain I have nothing whatever to say here. The services—the liturgical services—were carried out there just as they are carried out in all other prisons. But the chaplain at Portland had what one might call a high educational standard, and encouraged in every possible way a tendency towards rational, intellectual pursuits of any kind.

The most powerful factor in producing the results he aimed at—and in many notable cases achieved—was the prison library, and of it one can safely say that it was the very best in the whole prison service. But the mere possession of an extensive library is next to nothing unless care be taken to insure a suitable distribution of the books, and it was here that the genius of the man asserted itself. He first of all organized a system which insured the delivery of any book desired by a prisoner within fourteen days of his application for it; and it did not matter two straws to him whether the desired volume was in the library or not. If it were not there, he would

himself put it there, and if any question arose as to the work not having been sanctioned by the directors—who, by the way, have constituted themselves a board of literary censors, or have had the power of dispensing our penal literary *pabulum* given to them by the Home Secretary—the chaplain invariably settled the matter at head-quarters, and the prisoner had the book.

Then, again, he put an end to the old abuse of throwing in a book to a prisoner's cell without any reference whatever to the tastes or capacity of the man who was expected to read it. The old custom was to distribute the books as the warders distributed the loaves of bread, with this important difference: the prisoner was always present when his loaf was served out, but he was never present when his book was served out, and had generally to put up (for a whole week) with any literary rubbish he might find at his cell-door on his return from labour.

By way of showing what a real grievance this practice was, I may mention the case of two men well known to me. One was a highly educated man, and could appreciate and enjoy a high-class work; the other was a country yokel of illiterate tastes and unable to read or write a dozen words grammatically. I was located between those two men, and, as a matter of course, I always wished to know what kind of books had been left in their cells each 'library' day—a red-letter day to some prisoners.

On one particular occasion I thought I should have gone into hysterics on hearing the titles of the works which had been left for those two men. The edu-

cated man informed me with a grim smile that the 'schoolmasters' had left him the 'British Workman'; whilst it was only after a lot of hard spelling on the part of poor Hodge that I discovered the title of the work left for his edification. It was none other than Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'!

This little incident (which is symptomatic of much upon which one might enlarge *ad lib.*) occurred at Chatham; but such incidents were all but impossible at Portland in my time. The chaplain contrived somehow to rouse up his subordinates from that lethargic state into which ordinary mortals, under the dominion of an unvarying routine, are apt to fall, and the result was that this particular department was better served in Portland than in any of the seventeen prisons in which it has fallen to my lot to be confined.

For the rest, I cannot say much that is very creditable of Portland, and when a certain well-known ex-M.P. told me one day that he 'would sooner do five years' penal servitude at Portland Prison than go back to the House of Commons again,' it struck me that the ex-hon. Member shared in the general ignorance as to the *modus vivendi* in our convict establishments.

CHAPTER VIII

MILLBANK PRISON was classified as a 'convict establishment,' and, in the literal sense, it was such. But certain circumstances—structural and economic—caused it to be looked upon by the generality of convicts more as a reformatory 'home' than as a penal settlement, and when I was transferred there from Portland Prison I found the change a most agreeable one.

The dietary scale was precisely similar to that in all other convict prisons, but, somehow, the food tasted sweeter; and as, owing to the superior cellular and sanitary arrangements, one lived under healthier conditions, I felt a kind of pleasure in being alive—a thing never felt either in Chatham or Portland, where one seemed to be crushed in upon one's self.

Much of this 'pleasure in life' may have been fanciful, but much also had its origin in the surroundings of the place; and in my own case one particular circumstance contributed—more than anything else—to that buoyancy and hopeful feeling which enabled one to face the hard conditions of prison life in old Millbank Prison as one had never been able to face them before.

That circumstance demands a notice here. I had long been in the habit of keeping a diary, but the difficulties attached to an enterprise of this kind are so great—not the least being the standing objection of all prison officials to be made the subject of comment or criticism—when the thing has to be done in ordinary long hand and on a common slate, which is always exposed to the inspection of the warders, that I found it necessary to study shorthand, and I went in for a course of Pitman. In about six months I mastered the subject sufficiently well to enable me to embody the results of my observations in a phonetic style that would have puzzled Sir Isaac himself, and which often puzzled me, to decipher.

Locked up in those unreadable 'pot-hooks and hangers,' the essence of my experiences and observations lay for years beyond the reach of official vandalism. My *modus operandi* was simplicity itself, and, monotonous as the process might be to others, I never wearied of it. Each night my diary was posted up on my slate, and when both sides were full of 'matter,' I committed the contents of one side to memory, pacing up and down my cell each night for that purpose, and having thus inscribed it upon the tablets of the mind, I literally 'put the sponge across the slate,' commenced posting up again, and so on, *ad infinitum*. But although I took a pleasure in this kind of supererogatory labour, it told upon me in time, and I became as nervous as a cat, in consequence, I presume, of the constant strain upon the mind.

On arriving at Millbank, I was surprised to find the old chaplain whom I had formerly seen at Chatham Prison, and who knew perfectly well that some day I should publish my prison experiences.

Coming to my cell one evening, Mr. C. (one of the most sincere friends which a prisoner ever had at Chatham, Millbank, and, later, at Wormwood Scrubs) caught me in the act of making my notes, and, taking the slate in his hands, exclaimed:

'Ah, now you've done us! That shorthand business is good, but I did not suppose you were going in for *that*.'

'Well, sir,' replied I, 'my notes have been rubbed off the slate very often, and, besides, one may have facts to relate to which it might not be safe to give premature publicity; and then, again, the space is very limited. I desired more elbow room.'

'I am afraid you are burning the candle at both ends, and you must guard against a breakdown. Now, can I help you in any way?'

'Sir, I think you can. My memory is a rather good one, but I don't wish to trust wholly to it. Could you not allow me the use of copy-books during school hours, so that I might cart some of my cargo away with me in MSS. on my release? The present strain would then be relieved a bit.'

'You know I cannot make you a present of the copy-books, as they are Government stores; but it is within my powers to allow you the use of them here, and when you go away you could apply to the directors for them, and I would gladly back up your application.'

This was a great concession, and, though hampered with a condition I did not like, I thanked Mr. C. heartily for it, and from that day the keeping of my diary was an easy matter. It is true that a mishap (to be described later on) eventually deprived me of the use of that diary; but, as a matter of fact, the loss was more imaginary than real, as the bulk of the matter had, by long perusal, become stereotyped and fixed deeply in my mind.

I had not been long in the printing-office at Millbank ere I became acquainted with as comical a specimen of the *genus homo* as the whole prison service could produce. This man, who went by the name of Wolf—a name, by the way, so descriptive of its owner that he was generally called *the* Wolf—was an ex-sailor, and, as such, had a mortal antipathy to the warders, who, almost to a man, were old soldiers.

The Wolf was never better pleased than when he could get a 'screw' into trouble, and the printing shop was kept in such a ferment by this man's antics that the master-printer at last decided to get rid of him. The Wolf heard of the design, and, to give a Roland for an Oliver, resolved upon an exceptional bit of acrobatic cleverness. Whilst engaged in cleaning a large air-shaft placed in the very centre of the shop, he one evening contrived to get halfway up it, and from this coign of vantage he began to bombard the master-printer and his assistant with small pebbles, which he had stowed away in a bag fastened to his waist. It was quite impossible to get at him, as he kept up a strong fire

of pebbles, which did serious damage to over seven men in the office, myself being amongst the number of the injured. When an hour or so of strenuous effort to dislodge him from his position had failed to produce any beneficial results, the hose-pipe was brought into requisition, and it was thought he might be washed down. But the Wolf, as I said, had been a sailor, and this attempt to overcome him was as useless as all the others—it was merely throwing water on a duck's back.

The chief warder was summoned, and ladders were placed against the shaft, but one after another they were kicked away by 'Jack aloft.' At last the governor came upon the scene, and tried the persuasive art—of which he was a past master—but this also failed, and it was not until the resources of the establishment had been employed for more than two hours in an abortive attempt to bring the Wolf to *terra firma* that the governor, by a great stroke of genius, hit upon an effective agent—to wit, a rifle!

Though Wolf had been a sailor, he was undergoing penal servitude for killing a man with a military rifle, which he had stolen, and which he would have gladly used that day to shoot at his pursuers. Alack! he was now about to be hoist with his own petard.

I do not suppose that the governor really intended to use the weapon—I doubt whether his powers would allow him to do so. But, as it happened, the point was not put to a test, since the man, who was in his own element under the hose-pipe, and would

The hose-pipe was brought into requisition

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THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

have laughed at all the water in the New River Company's reservoirs, flung up his arms when he found himself covered by the muzzle of 'Brown Bess.'

Three months later—and when he had paid the penalty for his manifold sins and wickedness by twenty-eight days bread and water—the Wolf was supplied by the doctor with a poultice for a bad arm, and—*he ate the poultice!* Another external application, composed, I believe, of soap, turpentine, and some other vile ingredient, was next administered, and, incredible as it may appear, he ate *that* also!

This man had only one compeer in the prison in the way of eating. He was a man who occupied the cell facing mine, and whom I saw daily munching paper. I often pitied the fellow, and would now and again fling a loaf across from my cell to his. But although he was always glad to get bread—which he would bolt after the canine fashion—his staple food was paper.

Where all this paper came from was a source of curiosity to me for a long time, as only a small quantity was issued weekly from the stores for sanitary purposes. These small sheets of brown paper seemed to have an irresistible attraction for this man, who, from what I afterwards learned, was in the habit of preserving them for his Sunday's dinner.

For some time there had been complaints made to the chaplain and governor that the library books were in a sad state, owing to many leaves being found missing. One day the great mystery

as to the missing leaves was solved. An inspection of all the books in the possession of every prisoner —Prayer-books, hymn-books, Bibles, and educational works—was ordered, and when the searchers examined the cell of my friend on the opposite side of the landing, they found that every book in his cell had leaves missing. One book, indeed (the cell Bible), had lost more than fifty pages!

But this was not all. There is nothing which a prisoner values more highly or takes greater care of than the letters received from friends and relatives outside. Very few men indeed do not possess a bundle of such family relics, and as a register of all letters sent to prisoners is kept at the office, it was known that this particular man had received during his imprisonment nearly twenty. When, however, his cell was searched, as related above, not a single letter was to be found. The fellow had eaten up his correspondence!

A few choice spirits were discussing the vagaries of this and others of our fellow-sinners one morning, when an astounding piece of news began to circulate through the shop. Who was primarily responsible for, or what the real object of the fact thus suddenly sprung upon us was, I cannot say. All I know is that at 10 a.m. on that morning I looked forward to finishing my sentence at 'the Bank,' and that, long before noon, I knew that all my hopes were vain. An order had just been received from Whitehall that the printing-office was to be broken up, and the whole party, with bag and baggage, was to be at *once transferred* to Wormwood Scrubs.

That same afternoon the work of dismemberment began. Machines were taken to pieces, type-cases, frames, imposing stones, and the other vast impedimenta of a large printing depot began to revolve, like Mother Earth herself, round a centre, and, by the time the bell rang us to our cells—well, we left chaos behind us. Six hours before a compact and well-ordered office received us. Now nothing but dire confusion and muddle prevailed.

It is easy enough to say, 'Pack up your traps and go.' But when the 'traps' consist of a printing plant the packing-up is a serious business. A full week elapsed before we were ready to go. Once ready, however, we did not stand upon the order of our going, but were off at once; and as the massive gates of old Millbank Prison closed behind us, I thought we might go further and fare worse.

One *did* go further, but so far from faring worse, I fared better—at least, in one important particular—to wit, a better outlook for my diary, which, as the chaplain of Millbank followed us to 'the Scrubs,' I was again allowed to work up.

In about a week after our arrival we had the plant laid down on the new scene of operations, and one was soon enabled to hunt up new persons, places, and things.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison was at that time in its infancy. An experiment was to be made, and the scrubby ground in Shepherd's Bush was selected by the man whose *chef-d'œuvre* it was, and whose name was painted in large letters upon the avenue leading up to it.

Alas! how are the mighty fallen! The 'Du Cane's Avenue' of 1882 is plain 'Wood Lane' in this year of grace—ominous declension which finds its complement in the failure of our intended 'experiment.'

But stay. My business now is not to moralize, but to write history, and the very first historical fact I have to relate about Wormwood Scrubs is this. Within forty-eight hours of my arrival I was accosted by an old 'friend' whom I had seen at Chatham and Portland stations, and who then informed me that he could not sleep by night or work by day with an easy mind, as he had committed a murder in the provinces, and was haunted day and night by the ghost of his victim—a young woman with whom he had cohabited. I had not—indeed, I could not have—the least sympathy with this self-confessed murderer; but, at the same time, I could not disclose the secret confided to me in a private conversation, and so I heard the whole pitiful story with its tragic ending without being able either to serve his purpose—which was that of suicide—or to give him away to the authorities.

Personally, I did not like the man. He showed a brutal callousness in the treatment he accorded to the poor young woman whose only fault appeared to be that she loved him, not wisely, but too well. And I was not over-grieved when I learned, a month later, that he had voluntarily confessed his crime, and was executed at Derby.

One's sympathy is at times very elastic, and will expand or contract at pleasure. I found this to be

so in the next important case which came under my observation at Wormwood Scrubs. A bookbinder of Scottish nationality came to me one day in the 'shop' and begged me to write a petition to the Home Office on his behalf. Of course, I could not comply with his request as I knew nothing about the case, and thought it strange that my interposition should be asked. The man, however, followed me about like a dog, and would insist upon me sketching out the copy of a memorial to the Home Secretary.

Well, after some months of hard hitting, this Scotsman brought me round to his views, and I consented to write and forward the petition to Whitehall. Of course, I could only do this from the outside, and it cost me nearly £2 to do it. A whole month passed, and my poor Scottish friend began to doubt my capabilities in the way of writing petitions, and well he might, as beyond my own case, I had never written a petition before.

One day, however, as we were returning to the printing-office after dinner, I felt a heavy blow on my right shoulder, and, on looking round, I caught sight of my young Scotch friend, who was then under sentence of fifteen years' penal for killing a man in a fight at Glasgow. Thrusting his hand into mine he exclaimed:

'By G——! Jack, you have done it for me! They called me up at dinner-time, and told me that the Home Secretary has taken eight years off my sentence, and, as I have already done nearly six, I

am to be released on license at once. And I owe it all to you!'

He did not owe it all to me. He owed it to the fact that, like thousands more, the sentence passed upon him was out of all proportion to the offence, and also to a promise made by the previous Home Secretary that his 'case would be re-considered when he should have completed seven years of his sentence.'

We had some very strange individuals in 'the Scrubs' at this time, and I rather fancy the bulk of them were in the printers' shop. Besides the master-printer, who was a host in himself (insomuch as he was a man of the most fascinating address and possessed more enlightened views of things in general than I have ever found under the prison uniform), his assistant was certainly a curiosity in his way. Smart, intelligent, and, I believe, honest in his dealings with prisoners, he had the foulest mouth I have yet found in any man, and spent his whole time in formulating filthy jests or expressions.

With the majority of prisoners Assistant-Warder O. was popular enough, but there were those who disliked his obscenities, and who would, had he not fallen a victim to some who pretended to take the greatest pleasure in listening to the ribaldry constantly falling from his lips, have complained to the governor about him.

One day, however, an incident occurred in the shop which showed how little value was to be placed upon the applause privately bestowed by these men, for whose delectation this assistant-warder used to

let off his disgusting conceits and compositions daily.

The door of the office was suddenly flung open while we were all at work, and an orderly officer walked up to the master-printer, who was at his desk reading proofs. There was a hasty conversation, and then the three men above referred to were called up by name and marched in single file over to the governor's office. Everyone in the shop, except the man most interested in the matter (the assistant-warder, who made the incident an occasion for a dirty pun), was surprised at this sudden call upon three men who were sworn friends, and acted in concert whenever one of their number was involved in a difficulty. There was, in fact, an offensive and defensive alliance between those men, and that alliance more frequently served a bad than a good purpose.

When, therefore, the three were taken to the governor's office in company, we all knew that something exceptional was imminent. Thirty minutes passed, and Assistant-Warder O. was standing on his mat in the centre of the shop cracking his jokes —as he called them—to any prisoner who might pass him. I happened to be one of those who had occasion to cross his path, and as I did so out flew one of his filthy 'witticisms'(?). At that very moment the office door again opened; the same orderly officer entered. Another hasty chat with the master-printer, and then Assistant-Warder O. was informed that his presence was required at the governor's office.

In less than twenty minutes the cat was out of the bag. Nemesis had overtaken the foul-mouthed official, and, after being suspended from duty for a brief space, he was ultimately dismissed the service—not a day too soon.

I remember one occasion when, not wishing to get him into trouble with his superiors, I wrote a couplet and gave the paper into his hands with a request that he would read it. He threatened to report me for writing on official paper, but he did not do so. I know, however, that he read the lines, which were, I fancy, from Cowper, and are as follows:

> 'Immodest words admit of no defence,
> A want of decency is a want of sense.'

From the incident I have related above it is clear that Cowper wrote in vain so far as Assistant-Warder O. was concerned. There is such a thing as casting pearls before swine.

CHAPTER IX

ONE is always desirous of paying honour where honour is due, and although I wish to say as little as possible about prison officials, it would be an ungracious act on my part were I to omit from these memoirs the name of Captain Harvey, once Governor of Wormwood Scrubs. This gentleman has long since joined the majority, and therefore one feels more free to say what one knows about him than if he were still in the land of the living.

'Heavy, dull, phlegmatic,' would be the verdict of those who knew the Captain but superficially, and who contemplated him from a distance. But those who were brought into contact with him daily, and who were capable of forming a just estimate, saw in him nothing but solidity, gentleness, and amiability.

The hackneyed maxim, 'If you want to know me you must come and live with me,' is a sound one; and, as I was under Captain Harvey for years, I think I may say without fear of contradiction that, with the exception of one other prison governor (of whom more anon), not one of the seventeen gentlemen under whose administration I was during

my prison life could 'hold a candle,' as the saying is, to Captain Harvey.

Most men holding the governorship of a prison are influenced when dealing with prisoners by the representations of subordinate officials, and, without taking the trouble to make personal inquiries, stick to the reports of their official inferiors through thick and thin. Captain Harvey did things better. When a complicated case arose, he would postpone his decision upon it until he had made personal inquiries, and when he had thus satisfied himself as to the merits or demerits of the case, he would proceed to give judgment, not in the spirit of an autocrat whose will was law, but in the spirit of an impartial arbitrator, who had no other solicitude or interest in the matter than to deal fairly and squarely with the parties concerned.

But it was not only in the care he took to sift matters that the Captain was conspicuous above his fellows. He was still more so in the personal interest which he always evinced towards those under his charge. I have known him to leave his own comfortable quarters on a cold winter's night, and make his way to the cells of men whom, in his official capacity, he had that day either to punish or to acquaint with some distressing news from their friends outside.

This kind of thing so endeared him to the better class of prisoners that for many years his name was a household word, and there are those in London to-day who owe all the benefits they derived from their imprisonment, not to the penal machinery,

but to the personal interest taken in them by the governor.

I myself was not indebted to the Captain for any special act of kindness, but he always manifested an interest in the diary which I was then keeping, and never failed to ask me—whenever I was brought before him—how the work was progressing.

One day, as he was going his rounds, I chanced to be out of my cell, having an interview with the doctor, and as my cell-door was left open, I saw him stand in front of it for a moment, and then enter it. As it was my custom to have my slate and pencil always on the table for working purposes, he saw it there, and, I afterwards heard, tried to read it, but as I was then making my entries in shorthand, I don't think he could make head or tail of it—a thing which often puzzled myself to do. Although it is perfectly true that 'the evil that men do lives after them,' it is not equally true that the good is ever 'interred with their bones,' and the Captain was the clearest exponent of this great fact I, up to that time, had ever known.

Looking over my notes in connection with the printing-office at 'the Scrubs,' I find the following entry: 'An extravagant dandy, a distinguished professional, an outrageous socialist, and a blood-thirsty monster.' The four men thus described represented the composition of the printer's gang, which, I suppose, was the most 'respectable,' as it certainly was the most intelligent, gang in the prison.

Taking them in the order in which they there

stand, a few words about each may convey a clearer idea of a convict 'gang' (seen at its best) than any elaborate but more general account would give. The dandy was a gentleman, who, although only just beginning a twelve years' sentence, conducted his toilette with as much care as though he were going to a ball. He was fairly well educated, but possessed an unquenchable passion for gambling, and, indeed, it was through excessive indulgence in this great national vice that he overreached himself, brought a fine institution—of which he had for a long time been superintendent—to the verge of ruin, and sent himself into bondage for twelve mortal years.

One would have thought that such an experience was sufficiently soberizing to destroy the vanity of even a French 'exquisite.' But it was not so. The man made himself the laughing-stock of the whole prison by the ridiculous airs and affected mannerisms which always distinguished him. Common-place (often to the point of vulgarity) in his speech, he thought more about preserving his skin from pimples or blotches, and keeping his finger-nails trimmed and polished than about the quality of his work or the cultivation of his mind.

'Haw!' said this scrap of artificiality to me one morning—'haw! Don't you consider that I preserve my complexion to a T?'

'Well, you don't look at all amiss, old man, but, then, you take such pains in getting yourself up that one might think you had just stepped out of a band-box.'

'Haw, haw! Very good, by Jove! I *do* look well, you say?'

'Capital.'

'And—haw!—what do you think of my nails now?'

'The finest in the prison, no doubt.'

'And my teeth?'

'Excellent.'

Such is a specimen of the dandy's colloquial style, and although it might not offend so much on hearing it once, when it is thrust upon you daily by the same individual it becomes something more than insipid. Of all the men in our gang, not one liked the dandy, and he was cordially hated by the 'distinguished professional,' who could scarcely speak civilly to him.

We used to call this prisoner the 'Professor,' albeit no one knew what he was a professor of. He was undergoing five years for defrauding an insurance company. We have all heard of the man who, to cook his dinner, set fire to his house. This is just what the 'Professor' was convicted of doing. He first insured his premises, and then, getting into financial difficulties, set alight to them! I suppose there is not a bank, insurance office, or college in Europe that the 'Professor' could not give the history of. But although his knowledge was encyclopædic on those three institutions, he knew little or nothing of any others.

We once had a discussion on actors and theatres, and someone mentioned the tragic death of Mr. G. V. Brooks, who, it may be remembered, was

drowned when the ill-fated vessel, the *London*, was lost. The 'Professor,' who, nevertheless, was what one would call a practical 'man of the world,' had never heard of G. V. Brooks nor of the *London!* The one thing which the 'Professor' disliked was affectation, and the necessary result of the two men being thrown together was a chronic warfare between him and 'the dandy.' The latter was incapable of any deep sentiment, and treated foes and friends alike with that light, frivolous, supercilious nonchalance which the 'Piccadilly toff'—as he was himself called by certain lewd fellows of the baser sort—was noted for.

One fateful Sunday morning things reached the climax, and an outburst of fury from the 'Professor' —whose gorge rose when he saw his ancient enemy arrayed in a new jacket and cap, and with the highest possible polish on his shoes—led to the pair of them being marched off, amid the derisive giggles of the whole exercise party, to 'chokee'—the prison Tophet.

As showing the indifference sometimes displayed by prison officials in cases of this kind, I may state that, although both men had been punished previously for the like offence, they were, instead of being separated, again flung together, and, of course, the old scenes were repeated.

None were louder in their denunciations of this reckless encouragement of strife than the third member of this precious quartette. L. I. B. was a socialist, in the narrow but most generally accepted sense of that term, and never tired of airing his

views upon all things in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. A truly cosmopolitan mind animated the frail body of this little man, and led him to use the critical lance freely upon all coming near him without offending any. He was no respecter of persons, but would attack his closest friend as readily as his most avowed enemy. But he attacked people in such a fascinating manner that to get him 'on the job' many went out of their way to provoke his wrath and indignation.

The special object of B.'s polite abuse was the prison regimen, and as he possessed a wonderful faculty for distorting things, he could formulate an indictment against the powers that be on the most trivial circumstance, and magnify it until it assumed the proportions of a capital offence. If the gruel was under-cooked, or over-cooked, the whole commissariat was arraigned, and a nest of 'jobbers' reigned in the stores and the culinary department. All roads led to Rome with this man. Nothing could by any possibility be done as it should be done, and as *he* would do it. Creation itself was out of gear, and a better world might have been made—if *he* had been consulted!

He was one of those delightfully impracticable persons whom we can neither do with nor do without, and if he had a scuffle with one, he used his weapon so charmingly that, though badly injured, his enemy felt no pain. He made mincemeat of an original proposition which I foolishly advanced one day, anent the duality which reigns in nature; and

I felt that, so far as my contention went, I was placed *hors de combat.* But the thing was done so neatly and civilly that my *amour propre* was not in the least wounded or impaired, and we continued our debate as though he had not put an end to the controversy.

It is always pleasant even to wrangle with a man who, when he does give a facer never disfigures your 'dial,' and I must say that, although I have described him as an 'outrageous socialist,' his outrages were such as few would take exception to.

Alas! what a contrast was there between the third and the fourth member of this strange quartette! Elliott was a man of about forty, and was undergoing twenty years' penal servitude for the manslaughter of a brother—the second period suffered for the same kind of offence.

From the day he first entered the party till the day he was ignominiously ejected from it, his whole conversation smelt strongly of blood. I always felt when talking to him that the man must have been born in a slaughter-house, and, although I cannot speak with certainty, I believe that his sire was a butcher, the 'mortal foe to cows.'

One of Shakespeare's characters is made to say: 'Now could I drink hot blood,' etc., and sure I am that Elliott would have preferred a basin of blood to a basin of soup; he has often assured me that such was the case.

A very quarrelsome man, he was often engaged in what Bret Harte called a 'fite,' and when any blood was spilled, the sight of it seemed to inflame

the animalism within the man, and operated in the same way as a red rag is said to affect a bull. When everyone gave him a wide berth (in consequence of his innate savagery), and he could find nobody to 'fite' with, he has been known to cut or bite his own arms, etc., and suck the blood from the wounds thus inflicted! In the words of Butler,

> 'He cut into himself for lack
> Of something else to hew and hack.'

In one of his sanguinary moods he one afternoon seized a printer's roller, and, striking a fellow-prisoner on the head with it, threw himself upon the prostrate body of his victim, and if he had not at once been overpowered and taken to the cells, he would no doubt have drunk the blood he had drawn from the hapless convict's head.

Such details as one might give of this prisoner's exploits would be too horrible to appear in anything but a 'penny dreadful,' and we shall, therefore, with pleasure turn from this bloodthirsty monster and get into more congenial society.

Again referring to my notes, I find the name of a late distinguished solicitor, who was in the printers' shop at that time, and who was generally acknowledged by officials and the better class of prisoners to be the best conducted man in the prison. I never could get a voluntary statement from Mr. K. as to the ins and outs of his case, and therefore cannot specify the offence for which he was undergoing five years' penal servitude.

Well into the 'sere and yellow leaf' of life, K.

was one of the most amiable men I have ever spoken to. Almost feminine in the mildness of his speech, he was wholly masculine in his grasp of any subject one might introduce, and it was always a pleasure to hear him criticise the administration of the criminal law in France, where he had resided many years.

The odd thing about K. was this: he could analyze the criminal code of France, under which he had never served a day, but would not commit himself to any expression of opinion as to the criminal code of England, under which he had served some three years! I often twitted him on this point, but it was all to no purpose. He would give me one of his bland smiles and say in the gentlest way: 'We really do not understand the subject, and perhaps it is not understandable. The statute-book is overloaded with Parliamentary enactments, which the life of an ordinary man now-a-days is not long enough to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.'

Whatever his offence may have been, K. bore his punishment with exemplary fortitude and patience, and the chief warder once told me, when talking about the man, that he never had a more gentlemanly convict in his charge.

I regret to state that this man, so lovable and reliable in every respect, ended his days in prison. He met with an accident which necessitated an operation, and the operation killed him. One feels inclined to resent such a prosaic termination to a life so full of poetic interest (for if K. was anything, he was a poet). But thus it was. This amiable man died miserably in a prison hospital.

CHAPTER X

I HAD not been very long at Wormwood Scrubs ere the prophecy of the good old chaplain came very near indeed to a literal fulfilment. All the symptoms of downright brain-fag showed themselves, and a breakdown was within measurable distance. Although considered a good hand at swallowing physic, I am afraid that I did not care to rush off to the doctor whenever I felt a little out of gear. I knew convicts at Portland and Parkhurst who, had they but a slight pain in their finger or toe, would put their name down to see the doctor, and no greater grumblers are to be found in a prison than that class of convict.

The medical officer may pooh-pooh the thing as not needing medical treatment, and the fellow with the sore finger or toe immediately begins to whine. If dread of punishment deters him from offering violence or abuse—as it frequently does—he goes about describing the heartlessness of 'the butcher' (the usual prison name for the medical officer), and urging all and sundry to complain to the governor, chaplain, director, or Home Secretary.

In this connection I may tell a little story for the truthfulness of which I can vouch, as I heard the thing myself. One of the aforesaid grumblers was

located, much to my annoyance, in the next cell to mine, and late one evening, when we were all about to get to bed, this man's gas chanced to go out. Of course, it is never pleasant to have to go to bed in the dark, and one could understand him ringing his bell and calling the attention of the night-watchman to the circumstance. But this was not enough for my neighbour. Having slept upon the matter—if he really allowed himself to sleep over it—he rose next morning loaded and primed. He had evidently made up his mind to make this trivial affair a *casus belli*. He would show the authorities, and all others whom it might concern, that *his* gas was not to be allowed to go out with impunity. Accordingly, when the cells were unlocked in the morning, and the warder went round taking the names of all who desired an interview with any of the higher officials, he requested him to take his register number and name.

'Who do you want to see?' said Cerberus.

'I want to see the chief warder, and the chaplain, and the doctor, and the governor, and the director.'

'Don't you want to see the Secretary of State?'

'No. I am going to write a petition.'

'What do you want to petition about?'

'What's that to do with you? You put my name down as I told you. I am going to see everybody. My gas is not to be cut off with impunity.'

'Go in to your hole and shut your door.'

The warder entered his name to see the doctor. Mayhap he thought it was a medical case, and that day he was visited by the man of pills and doses,

who, finding that he merely complained of having to go to bed in the dark, had him reported for giving unnecessary trouble, and the grumbler not only had his gas cut off, but his dinner as well, for two days.

But to return to my own case. I felt thoroughly washed out every morning, never being able to get more than three or four hours' sleep—seldom that—at night. So I thought it best to see the medico, who, of course, knew nothing about my literary labours.

'What's the matter with *you?*' quoth Dr. L., who, by the way, was very attentive to any prisoner ill enough to require medical aid.

'Run down a little, doctor, I fancy.'

'Are the bowels open? Put out your tongue. More feverish than pulsation seems to—— What are you working at here?'

'Making mats, doctor.'

'Well, don't make any more mats. Go to bed. I thought you were in the printers' shop?'

'Yes, sir, but the whitewashers are in possession this week.'

'Well, be off to bed. I'll send you something.'

The 'something' was sent, and duly gulped, but it did not mend matters. On seeing me next day, he ordered my removal to the infirmary. The pulse had run up considerably during the night, and I was becoming delirious. I never suffered from brain-fever before, although I have had a touch of it since. But I shall never forget the two months during which I lay tossing and tumbling upon the bed in that prison hospital. I resisted the fiend as long as I could, and have a misty recollection of

walking about my cell imagining that I was in a railway-station, climbing mountains, swimming in impossible seas, and—— Oh, the agonizing positions into which I was plunged at times! De Quincy's account of his experiences with the Malay alligators, etc., is the only thing I can compare with my own sufferings, and when I say that I was very near the time I should be released, it can easily be understood what a critical period it was.

I had every consideration and care shown me by the medical staff, and particularly by the doctor, between whom and the governor I regret to state that I was the innocent cause of a little friction on one occasion. It happened in this way: when nearly convalescent, I made an application to the governor (Captain H.) on one of his daily visits to the hospital which that gentleman did not seem disposed to grant. He was, I think, rather worried at the time, and my irritability may have led me to express my disappointment in a way he did not like. Anyhow, he passed on to the next cell with a rather hasty gesture and the remark: 'Oh, go and put your head in a bucket.' I am quite certain that the Captain was too kind-hearted a man to mean giving pain, but he happened to be attended on his round that day by the doctor's principal warder, who evidently reported the incident to his chief. The latter visited me twice daily—morning and evening—whilst I was coming round, and sitting on the bed that evening, he said:

'I understand that the governor said something *day he to-day.* What was it?'

'Oh, I don't mind it a bit, sir; he is too good to mean any harm.'

'That may be. But you are *here* now, and if he says that again, tell him we have no buckets, and your case does not need that you should put your head in one. When that becomes necessary, I'll provide one for the purpose.'

Whether or not there was any official correspondence over this vital question I cannot say; most probably there was. Within a week I was sufficiently recovered to allow of my return to work at the 'case,' and as the job then in the printers' hands was the *Annual Criminal Calendar*, I may as well say a few words about it here.

All matter not intended for publication, but merely for circulation and service in the prison department, was then printed at Wormwood Scrubs, and of this the *Calendar* was at once the most laborious and the least useful. A record of all prisoners committed to all the prisons in the United Kingdom is a colossal task for a printer, and now that the French system of identification—the anthropometrical—is in full swing, and every permanent spot and blemish on a man's body is studied critically, entered in the book (for the purpose of slinging it in your teeth when you next turn up), and scattered up and down the world, the mere setting up of this criminal doomsday book in type is a huge undertaking. I give here a rough diagram by way of illustrating the kind of volume at which our criminal Caxtons were pegging away when I returned from the hospital.

Name.	*Age.*	*Religion.*	*Occupation.*	*Offence.*	*Where Committed.*	*Sentence.*	*Previous Convictions.*	*Body Marks.*
John Smith	30	Protestant	Painter	Burglary	London	10 years' penal servitude	18	Mole on left cheek; nose slit; teeth very bad; scar on left arm; tattoo-marks on right ditto; old sore on back; left knee slightly discoloured; second toe on right foot missing; scar on left ankle.
Joseph Brown	25	Roman Catholic	Baker	Arson	Leeds	5 years' penal servitude	1	Hair red; eyes hazel; ears very large, and old scar on left lobe; impediment in speech; forehead low; upper lip scarred, etc.

The foregoing diagram does not, of course, represent any particular prisoner known to me, but is intended only as a specimen of the work—the principal work—then done in the printers' shop.

On my return there I was associated with two other compositors, and put upon the 'marks' column. The Home Office people were sending message after message, in which they complained of the delay in getting the book forwarded (and it certainly was late that year). The consequence was that we were working at high pressure, and the truth of the old proverb 'The more haste the less speed' was exemplified in a way that confounded the master-printer and sent the Home Office almost into hysterics.

The last line had been 'set,' and the various 'galleys' containing the type were placed on the large imposing-stone preparatory to being locked up in the 'forme' and handed to the printer. The man whose duty it was to perform this last function was one of the best 'comps' we had, and no one had the least doubt but that we had at last washed our hands of the *Calendar*.

Suddenly, however, a heavy thud, accompanied by a deep groan, was heard, and on looking towards the stone, I saw that a terrible mishap had befallen the poor 'imposer.' In lifting the forme from the stone, a rotten piece of wood (called 'furniture') had given way, and the whole four pages of 'matter' lay on the floor in a hopeless 'pie'!

Oh, there were weepings and wailings in the 'shop' that day! The master-printer roared like a piece

of ordnance, whilst the hapless wight upon whose luckless head abuse was poured with an amazing prodigality became, I fear, mentally affected by the shock, and was admitted into the infirmary next day. How the people at Whitehall took the matter I cannot say, but I believe that the job was hurriedly handed over to Eyre and Spottiswoode.

However that may be, the task imposed upon us poor 'comps' by this accident was herculean. I never saw a printing-office in such a chaotic condition in my life. There was 'pie' to the left of us, 'pie' to the right of us, 'pie' in front, and in rear of us, and what had only taken a week to 'set up' took nearly a month to 'dis.'

It was whilst engaged in clearing the floor of the débris caused by this mishap that a clerical convict was attached to the party, and placed beside me in the shop. He was the first, though by no means the last, 'gentleman of the cloth' with whom I have been brought into contact in 'Quad Strass,' and if only one-half of what he told me was true, he should have been there many years ago. An ordained minister of the Established Church, he had, admittedly, been guilty of the most audacious frauds, and was in league with two of the cleverest of Continental swindlers. It was only owing to the arrest of these two men at Monte Carlo for a slight offence that a clue was obtained which enabled the police to connect them with a systematic course of frauds, and both were sent into penal servitude for long terms.

They had not been in prison very many months

when they put themselves into communication with a solicitor, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of the Rev. A. B., who meanwhile fled the country.

One fine afternoon a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, who gave his name as Arthur Keay, was locked up for disorderly conduct in a Brighton hotel, and was fined ten shillings and costs for his frolic. On leaving the court, however, he was identified by a lady whom he had previously robbed of some valuable securities, and was once more given into custody. What happened to the proverbial pitcher too often taken to the well then happened to him. He was broken.

But the genius of the man shone out even when *in extremis;* when charged at the police station and required to give a name he gave, not the Rev. A. B., but the plebeian one of Joseph Brown, and, as the police must charge a man under the name he gives at the station, it was as 'J. B.' and not as 'A. B.' that he was put on trial, convicted, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

One can always sympathize with a man who, under the pressure of necessity, runs off the railroad line of strict honesty now and then. As the 'Prison Bard' has put it:

'If a man who's under pressure should yield twenty times a day,
The true and proper inference to draw
Is, not that he is vicious, but, being human, must obey
That necessity which knows no other law!'

But it is quite a different thing when, as in the case of the Rev. A. B., no such pressure exists. The

man who spends £100 in a single night at the gambling table cannot hope for consideration or sympathy when detected in making good his losses by systematic frauds, and such, in brief, was the head and front of this reverend gentleman's offending.

Apropos of clerical offenders, I had some years later a very trying time of it with a young fellow who was the only son of an army chaplain stationed at Gibraltar. He was originally intended for the Church, and had actually gone up to Oxford for the purpose of qualifying for the serious business of 'curing' souls. But in consequence of some mad freak or another he was sent down, and, chagrined at what he thought was excessive severity, he gave up the idea of ever becoming a spiritual physician, and took to the more mundane pursuit of a commercial life.

At the instigation of a mutual friend I undertook to board and lodge this youthful Lothario, receiving from Gibraltar the modest sum of fifteen shillings per week, out of which I had to allow him at least four shillings weekly for pocket-money. Well, I did not mind that so long as the fellow kept himself a little bit decent. But it was his custom to come home in the small hours of the morning, and, secreting himself in the lavatory, to go in for a good old booze.

Next day a quart bottle—empty, of course—would be discovered stowed away in that popular resort, and for a long time no one knew whence those bottles came. As we were all total abstainers then, suspicion alighted on the head of the youthful heir of

the chaplain of Gibraltar; but as no one wished to be hard on the boy, we took no notice of his nocturnal revels in the lavatory.

One Sunday morning, however, he came to my bedroom, and, admitting that he was madly in love with a young woman then in service at Sir G. W.'s house at Richmond, asked me to write to his father with the view of obtaining his assent to their marriage. As I did not care to step between him and his true love, I consented to do so. But in reply to my letter, the reverend chaplain informed me that if his son contracted an alliance with the young woman in question, he would stop the weekly allowance, and have nothing further to do with him.

The chaplain was, no doubt, right in his decision, but when I informed Lothario of it, he unbosomed himself to me, told me that the young woman was already *enceinte*, and asked me what he should do. Of course, I could only say that his proper course was to marry the girl, and as he seemed to hang fire on this point, I told him that if he did not do so I would have nothing further to do with him.

That settled the matter. He married the girl and his allowance was discontinued—a very harsh proceeding on the part of his father. But as I had been instrumental in advising this union, and the young fellow had no resources to fall back upon, I got him a job as agent to a well-known insurance company, giving a bond for £10 on his behalf.

He left my house and went to live in lodgings with his wife at Dalston, and I heard no more about him for fully six months. One day, however, the super-

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intendent of the company came to me, and said that the bond I had given was forfeited, as the man had decamped with a lot of money belonging to the company.

I had to pay up, and wrote to Gibraltar, informing the youth's parent of his son's misdeeds.

The worthy chaplain did not even acknowledge the receipt of my letter, and so things went on until, six months later, I read the following announcement in the *Daily Chronicle* :

'Yesterday a smart and well-dressed young man named L. F. H. S. was charged before the Lord Mayor with having stolen postal orders, the property of the Postmaster-General, and was committed for trial at the Old Bailey.'

About a fortnight later the prisoner was indicted before the Common Sergeant at the Old Bailey Sessions, and I fully intended to put in a good word for him before sentence should be pronounced. But, to my surprise, he made a statement in court which absolutely prevented me from saying a word in his favour. Asked what he had to say in answer to the charge, he assured the bench that he was led astray by his wife, and that his then position was wholly due to the fact that he had married a woman who was socially beneath him.

I have always had a high contempt for our shabby ancestor, who, in reply to the accusation brought against him, tried to shuffle out of his difficulty by saying, 'The woman Thou gavest to be my wife, *she* did tempt me, and I did eat.'

When I heard this son of the army chaplain trying

to screen his criminality behind the skirts of the young woman whom he had got into trouble, I turned from him in disgust; and although he called upon me as a witness in his favour, I refused to give evidence on his behalf.

The superintendent of a certain 'philanthropic (?) mission' seems to have been favourably impressed by this cowardly man's representations, and, as it was his first conviction, he got off with the nominal punishment of four months' imprisonment with hard labour!

It may be interesting to a large number of readers to learn what 'hard labour' means, and I shall now proceed to describe what, in official language, it actually amounts to.

CHAPTER XI

A PRISONER sentenced to a term of imprisonment 'with hard labour'—which never exceeds two years—is subject to the following regulations, so far as the hard labour is concerned:

'RULE 38.—A prisoner may be employed in the service of the prison, but shall not be employed in the discipline thereof, or in the service of any officer or servant thereof, or in the service or education of any other prisoner.

'RULE 39.—(1) 'Every male prisoner not being a juvenile offender (*i.e.*, under sixteen years of age), if sentenced to "hard labour" shall, for twenty-eight days, or for the whole of his sentence if it is less than twenty-eight days, be employed in strict separation on hard bodily or hard manual labour, provided that no prisoner shall be so employed for more than ten or less than six hours *per diem*, exclusive of the time allowed for meals.

'If his sentence is more than twenty-eight days he shall, after that period, provided his conduct and industry are good, be employed on labour of a less hard description—in association, if practicable—*and shall be eligible* for all the privileges of the pro-

gressive stage system; provided that no prisoner shall be required to perform any labour of any description unless certified by the medical officer to be fit for such labour.

'(2) An aged prisoner in weak health, or any prisoner suffering from physical or mental infirmity likely to be aggravated by cellular isolation, shall be employed on such work and in such way as the medical officer may direct.

'RULE 41.—The labour of all prisoners shall, if possible, be productive, and the trades and industries taught and carried on shall, if practicable, be such as may fit the prisoner to earn his livelihood on release.'

The foregoing paragraphs contain the latest pronouncements of the prison authorities on the 'labour question' as applied to male prisoners sentenced to hard labour in a *local gaol.*

The regulations affecting the employment of prisoners in a convict establishment are very similar. But in neither case do the official regulations convey the least idea as to the nature of the work done by prisoners. They tell us the number of hours a man works, and the conditions under which he works, but they impart no information whatever on the one point which most thinking men know to be of vital importance—viz., the *kind* of employment provided by the State for its erring children.

A great military authority once said: 'Tell me what you give your soldiers to eat, and I'll tell you what sort of an army you have got.'

But if a man's food influences his life or character in any way, how much more does his work do so! I believe that men's characters are to a very great extent moulded by their occupations, and that they may be either made or marred by the kind of work they are engaged upon. Hence the question of prison labour, although not thought much about, is a very important one, and as no light is thrown upon it by the official regulations, a brief survey of the chief convict and local prisons in this connection may be acceptable to my readers.

At Chatham (now closed) the staple or principal work was that known as 'navvy work.' Excavating basins for the Admiralty, dredging, and the making of bricks constituted the daily round during the whole time I was at that station; and when I say that such work was in the hands of contractors, who allowed the authorities so much per day for convict labour, and who were under engagements to complete the work within a given time, it can be easily understood that the labour imposed upon prisoners there was, literally, 'hard'—*very* hard—indeed.

I have myself fainted more than once on returning to my cell after putting in a day's work in the brick-fields at Chatham, and the work done in the brick-fields was light in comparison with that done in 'the basin,' where more human blood was spilt and more human lives lost through excessive labour than in any other prison in the country.

At Portland the convicts were employed from six to eight hours daily in blasting rock, hewing

stones, and building fortifications; the celebrated breakwater at that station is the work of convicts.

The same thing may be said of Portsmouth and Dover. The fortifications in each of those places—more particularly in the former—have been erected by men under sentence of penal servitude, and we know what such work means!

I have never been to Dartmoor, but I believe that, as in Parkhurst Prison, the outdoor labour is mainly agricultural. Parkhurst is practically an invalid station, and the bulk of the inmates are employed in tilling the soil and farm work.

In reference to the farm produce of Parkhurst, it has often occurred to me that the authorities might do a worse thing than exhibit some of the results of convict labour in this department at the Agricultural Hall in North London. Apart from other considerations (well worth considering), such a course would act as a stimulant and lead thousands who now find their way back to the Isle of Wight to seek 'fresh fields and pastures new' abroad on their release.

The work at Borstal is of a nondescript character at present. That prison may be said to be in a transition state, as preparations are now being made there for the new experiment about to be tried on youthful offenders.

Turning from convict stations to the chief Metropolitan gaols—Pentonville and Wormwood Scrubs—we find that the work done in both is of a very miscellaneous character. The post-office authorities

furnish a large amount of the work done in those prisons, and of the making of mail-bags (chiefly for foreign service) there seems to be no end. Mat-making, rug-making, brush-making, and tailoring are the other occupations in which the bulk of our local prison population is engaged from early morn till dewy eve, from Monday till Saturday, and from January till December.

Rule 41 suggests much more than known facts warrant. It says: 'The labour of all prisoners shall, if possible, be productive, and the trades and industries taught and carried on shall, if practicable, be such as may fit the prisoner to earn his livelihood on release.'

The picture here conjured up is a very nice one indeed, but I am afraid it is scarcely true to life. I have known very many who have spent years at the 'trades and industries,' here said to be 'taught.' But whether the system of 'teaching' *en vogue* in the prison department is defective, or the pupils are an inept lot, I have never found one who, outside of an institution such as, say, the St. Giles's Christian Mission, was ever able to 'earn his livelihood on his release' when put to work with the ordinary 'British workman.' On the other hand, I am now in touch with many ex-convicts who have tried to get bread-and-cheese by following the 'trades and industries' said to be 'taught' them in prison, and each one of them tells me that the thing is impossible. I do not say that it is impossible—nothing is impossible under certain conditions—but an ounce of *fact is worth* a ton of talk, and I can put a dozen

men into the witness-box to-day who, having tried to earn a livelihood by the 'trades and industries' 'taught' them in prison, are glad to earn 2s. 6d. *per diem* at a class of work *not* taught in prison, but which might, with profit, be taught there.

If, however, I cannot say much in favour of the technical instruction given to prisoners with the view of enabling them to earn their livelihood on their release, I cannot say too much for the pains taken to insure what, after all, stands higher in the scale of virtue than mere technical knowledge of any kind—I allude to cleanliness, without which one can scarcely believe in the possibility of godliness.

Here is a copy of the law referring to cleanliness —a law which the executive department at Holloway Prison appears to have given the cold shoulder to in these latter days:

'A prisoner shall be required to keep himself clean and decent in his person, and to conform to such regulations as may be laid down for that purpose.

'The hair of a female prisoner shall not be cut without her consent, except on account of vermin or dirt, or when the medical officer deems it requisite on the ground of health, and the hair of a male prisoner shall not be cut closer than may be necessary for purposes of health and cleanliness.

'Every prisoner shall obey such regulations as regards washing, bathing, and hair-cutting as may be from time to time prescribed with a view to the maintenance of health and cleanliness.

'A prisoner shall not be stripped or bathed in the presence of any other prisoner.

'Each prisoner shall keep his cell, utensils, books, and other articles issued for his use, and his clothing and bedding, clean and neatly arranged, and shall clean and sweep the yards, passages, and other parts of the prison as may be directed.'

A code of laws, however excellent the laws may be, is practically worthless unless there be a man behind to enforce it; and although the official arrangements regarding cleanliness are all that could be desired, I regret to say that in some prisons those arrangements are set at naught by the very men whose duty it is to carry them out.

There was one landing in 'the Scrubs' which contained eighty-two men, who were supposed to wash themselves at least once a day. The officer in charge of that landing was, however, a very dirty man himself, and I often thought, when he took my loaf of bread out of the basket and handed it to me in the morning, that he must have slept in the coal-cellar the night before, so begrimed with dirt were his hands.

One fine day H.M.'s late Inspector of Prisons came round the ward, and inspected each cell more critically than was his wont. When he reached my landing he asked the warder when the prisoners bathed. 'For,' said he, 'some of them look as if they had not washed themselves for a month!'

The inspector was quite justified in saying so, as a dirtier lot of men were not to be found in the prison, *and the* secret of their filthy appearance lay in the

fact that the warder was himself a dirty man, and did not enforce the regulations as to cleanliness in his ward. Nay, more, it was generally believed that the fortnightly supply of soap issued from the stores for the use of prisoners went through another channel, and much of it found its way to places it was never intended it should reach !

CHAPTER XII

WHEN I was released from Wormwood Scrubs, in accordance with the order of the Home Secretary, I again returned to Manchester, but, on the invitation of a friend, I brought my mother, brother, and sister up to London, and started as an insurance agent, my friend becoming security to the amount of £10. Finding furnished lodgings expensive, and believing that by taking a house and furnishing it on the hire system, we might gain enough by letting apartments to live rent free, I took a place in Hackney, and furnished it by getting £40 worth of furniture from Harris of Shoreditch, who agreed to let me have the goods on payment of £5 deposit and weekly instalments of 7s. 6d. till the whole was paid.

Had we found suitable lodgers, as we all along hoped to be able to do, things would have turned out differently. As it was, we were not able to meet the expenses incurred, and before the third quarter's rent became due I found it necessary to raise a couple of pounds to meet current expenses and keep my insurance book properly balanced. Among the articles of furniture obtained from Harris was a carpet, which, as it was too large for any of the rooms, we had not used, and upon this

One morning, as I was setting out on my rounds, I was arrested

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carpet I raised thirty shillings from a neighbouring pawnbroker. Of course, it was not a right thing to do, but I am not now concerned to defend this, or, indeed, any subsequent misdeeds. My purpose here is merely to state briefly how it was that I was again sent to prison. I may say, however, that the value of the carpet was some £6, and that the amount I had up to that time paid on the furniture exceeded £20, so that the price of the carpet had been paid over and over again.

A month later I was somewhat behind in my collections on the insurance book; I could not get the money in, and, consequently, was unable to keep up with the expenses. In those circumstances the fact of my having pawned the carpet reached Mr. Harris's ears, and I was privately informed that he intended to seize and retake possession of all the other furniture, which, although one-half of their value had been paid, he was within his legal rights in doing.

Knowing what this would mean to my mother and sister, who would then be homeless, I resolved to be beforehand with him, and, bringing in a broker, I sold up everything in the place for £10—but one-half of what I had already paid on account of them. With this money I was enabled to make arrangements for my mother and sister to be sent back to another brother then in Manchester, and taking lodgings for myself, I went on with my insurance work.

One morning, as I was setting out on my rounds, I was arrested, and charged with having stolen the

furniture. Committed for trial, I was brought before Sir Peter Edlin at the Clerkenwell Sessions, and was sentenced to twelve calendar months with hard labour. I should have been more severely punished had not the superintendent of the insurance company spoken favourably of my work and the correctness of all my accounts with the company.

Such were the circumstances under which I found myself for the fourth time within the whitewashed walls of a prison cell on a fresh charge.

From the Session House at Clerkenwell to Cold Bath Fields Prison, whither I was then sent, was no distance, and nothing occurred worthy of notice until I had been at the prison a full month. During that time I found plenty of food for thought in my surroundings, and as, when referring to the Manchester City Prison (Chapter VI., p. 54, *ante*), I promised to hold forth in connection with a prison to which it bore 'a strong family likeness,' this is the proper place to do so, as the 'inhospitable mansion' there referred to was the one to which I was removed on leaving the dock at the Clerkenwell Sessions.

Like Belle Vue, Cold Bath Fields was the coldest local gaol I was ever tied up in, and, indeed, never was a more suitable name given to any institution than that by which the old gaol—now the scene of so much life and activity—will ever be known. It was in December, 1885, that I first entered it, and a raw December evening is not the most suitable time to test the merits or medicinal virtue of a cold *bath. The* pleasure of a bath was always enjoyed

by myself, but on this occasion it certainly was not an ideal one. My teeth chattered, and my limbs became stiff ere I had been in that frigid zone two hours, and from the day I entered it until the day I left (some months later), I did not know what it was to be warm. The intense cold, plus the meagre fare given to prisoners for the first month, caused more bodily suffering than any other item in the penal machinery, and much as I hated the tread-wheel at any other place, I prized it highly at ' the Fields ' as the only possible way of keeping the blood in circulation !

The daily round is much the same in all local gaols, but it is not to the established order of things one must look to find the cause of the difference between one prison and another, a difference so great that I have heard many old gaol-birds—men who seldom get into a convict prison, but are seldom out of a local one—protest that they would sooner do twelve months in one gaol than six months in another.

It is to the administrators of the law rather than to the law itself that one must turn if he would understand the preference given to certain prisons, and it was in this respect chiefly that Cold Bath Fields so much resembled Belle Vue Gaol. Both were administered by the most crusty, cantankerous, and peevish lot of ' screws ' I have ever seen in blue serge and brass buttons. I can only recall one warder whose manners and general behaviour to those in his sphere of operations were superior to what one would expect to find in a cow-herd, and

even that exceptional gentleman was liable to freaks of fancy which often made it extremely difficult to keep on good terms with him.

When my first month had expired and I became eligible for employment out of my cell, I was one night visited by this touchy mortal, and asked if I could use a 'stick,' an implement used by compositors in setting type. From all I had heard of him I thought I should like to use a different kind of stick on his elephantine body, but, although brave enough behind his back, no one cared to beard this tiger in his den, or tell him to his face what he thought about him.

Having satisfied him as to my powers in using a 'stick,' he informed me that there was going to be a vacancy in the printers' shop, and that I might apply to the governor next day for the job. I knew thoroughly well what this circuitous way of doing business meant. It had been settled long before that I was to fill the vacancy created by the release of the one 'comp' of which that petty printing-office could boast. But it is the usual way with some prison officials who need the services of a particular prisoner to make it appear that they are conferring a favour when they ask him to 'make an application' for a post which—as in this case—they cannot find anyone else to fill.

I am not one to look a gifthorse in the mouth, and as anything was better than being tied to a seat in a cold cell all day long, with my temperature somewhere about zero, I applied for the job, and, of course, got it. Changes, however, are not necessarily

improvements, and before I had been in the printing-office a month I found it was a case of going from the frying-pan into the fire, or, to be more accurate, from a cold stone to an iceberg.

For the first week or two I was put upon 'dissing' (*i.e.*, distributing type from the 'forme' used into the various cases), and as this cannot be done without the aid of cold water, I often had my fingers frozen to the lead used in the process. One might have borne this with some degree of equanimity if the warder in charge had been, I do not say kind, but reasonable. He was, on the contrary, distinguished above his official fellows not only for the coarseness of his mind, but for the marvellous ingenuity he displayed in making himself ridiculous, and yet he was not, on the whole, a bad-hearted man. As a specimen of his style, I may mention two little incidents which, though uninteresting in themselves, are amusing as symptoms.

I had occasion to set up in type a sentence in which the words 'King's Cross Station' appeared. I set it just as I have written it here. When the proof was submitted for this gentleman's inspection and correction, it was sent back to me, and on looking over it, I found that he had run his pen through the apostrophe in the word 'King's,' and thus made the famous Metropolitan railway-station in Pentonville Road stand thus: 'Kings Cross.'

Thinking that it was a slip on his part, I took no notice of the correction, but left it standing as originally set. The forme was then put upon the press, and the order for 1,000 tickets printed off.

On checking it he called for the revised proof, and finding that I had taken no notice of his correction, he reported me for disobedience of orders. The matter, however, had evidently been brought under the notice of the steward, for whose department the work was intended, and that gentleman intervened between us so effectually that, instead of being reported, I was told by the governor's clerk that I had acted properly in the matter. My friend the enemy did not think I had acted properly, and from that day my position in the printing-office was anything but a pleasant one.

On another occasion I set up the sentence, 'On finding this, enquiry should be made at once.' When the proof was submitted the warder came to me and said:

'How do you spell inquiry?'

'Just as I have set it up, sir.'

'Well, you have set it up wrong, sir.'

'I shall alter it if you wish, sir.'

'Well, do alter it, and if you have not learned to spell yet, I should advise you to attend school. Inquiry is never spelt with an "e"; it should be "i."'

'That is a matter of custom only, sir. I think, if you will consult the latest authorities, you will find the "e" is invariably used.'

'Authorities! The only authority here is myself. Correct the proof as marked.'

Of course I did so, but was not quite satisfied with the corrected form, although I knew it was not likely to be questioned afterwards, as both forms *are used.*

The foregoing incident is trivial in itself, but it illustrates the character of the man under whom I worked for five months, and with whom very few prisoners got on without collisions for more than a week at a stretch. Happily, my stay in 'the Fields' did not exceed five months, as an order arrived from the Home Office to transfer the plant to Pentonville Prison, which then (1885-1886) ceased to be a convict centre, and became what it is to-day, a local gaol only.

Before proceeding with my experiences at Pentonville under the new regimen, I shall here transcribe the notes which I find in my diary relating to this period:

'Local prison system considered. What a rational penal system should aim at. Punishment *per se* appears to be the main object now, and in nine cases out of ten it is the main result of present arrangements.

'Still, were the relative merits of long and short sentences to be put to the vote, and none but competent and trustworthy observers suffered to pronounce upon it, there would be something like unanimity amongst them in favour of the latter.

'Made all that it might be made, and with due regard to individual peculiarities and requirements on release, a "drag"—*i.e.*, three months' imprisonment—should, with the present machinery, be a more effective deterrent than three years' penal servitude as things now are.'

But to my story, or, rather, history. Within a week of getting our marching orders we had the

small printing plant duly packed, and I soon found myself once more in the 'Model Prison.' As I was the only practical printer then in the party, it fell to my lot to make the arrangements in the new office, and, so far as I know, the arrangements then made still exist.

The building in which we were to conduct our operations was a two-storey one, and as the basement was occupied by the shoe-makers, we had the benefit of the top floor, two windows of which looked out upon Market Street, the houses upon the opposite side being within our range of vision. In laying down the printing plant, I naturally placed my own case and imposing-stone in front of one of those windows, an arrangement which enabled me to get a glimpse of civilized life as it was worked out in the private houses opposite.

How very little do we know what the most trifling actions in our daily life may lead to! The placing of my case in front of that prison window led to results which are still operating upon me even while I am writing these lines, and will continue to affect me, not only to my dying day, but throughout eternity.

Here is the story as it stands in my diary, and has since been published as a curiosity of prison life, the only differences being that it was, for obvious reasons, then written in the third person, and that in this rehearsal of it I bring it up to date by adding the melancholy sequel.

CHAPTER XIII

A TERM of imprisonment often means the disruption of every social tie, and one can cite innumerable instances of husbands and wives being separated for life owing to one or other of the parties being sent to prison.

But, on the other hand, I have never heard of more than two cases in which a matrimonial alliance had its beginning, its middle, and its ending in a term of imprisonment, and the last of those two cases was one in which I was personally interested.

This remarkable incident occurred in Pentonville Prison, where I was undergoing a sentence of twelve months' hard labour. The printing-office, to which I referred in the last chapter, was situated in the upper part of a large shed, and overlooked the adjacent street (Market Street), on the opposite of which was a line of houses let out in tenements. In arranging my plant I selected the spot nearest the window for my cases, etc., and as it was summer-time, and the windows were kept open, I had command of the houses opposite.

Being a lover of birds, it was my custom to bring out part of my breakfast bread daily to feed a colony of sparrows which made the sill of my window

a kind of rendezvous. Whilst thus engaged I one morning caught sight of a round, fresh-faced girl of about nineteen summers peering at me intently from the top window of one of the opposite houses.

I was a bashful man, and besides this, the consciousness of my humiliating position made me feel rather shy of female inspection. But, on the other hand, I was struck by the sympathetic expression I saw, or fancied I saw, on this young woman's face, and we both stood there for nearly a quarter of an hour looking at each other. Presently an elderly lady was seen entering the room, and the young girl withdrew; but in shutting her window she smiled rather pleasantly, and slightly waved her hand as if by way of 'Au revoir.' This was too much for my susceptible heart, and I thereupon resolved to cultivate the acquaintance thus strangely made, should opportunity offer.

Opportunity did offer itself at the same hour next morning, when this odd pair of lovers had another mute inspection of each other. The young woman was evidently at business all day, as I did not see her for the first few days, except at the same hour each morning. On the following Saturday afternoon, however, I was surprised to find my Juliet sitting at the opposite window, and every now and then casting furtive glances in the direction of mine. The ice had been broken. When, after a couple of hours' contemplation of the imprisoned Romeo, the young lady rose, and, with a formal salutation, closed her window, I was emboldened to throw her *a kiss, which* was promptly returned.

That settled the matter. For nearly two months no day passed without some kind of signal being flung across the street. A sort of wireless telegraphy was at first established, but did not work well, and was, besides, extremely risky, most of the houses on the opposite side of Market Street being then, as now, occupied by prison officers.

Your genuine lover has a wonderful fecundity of invention, and this particular Romeo hit upon a novel plan for establishing communication with Juliet. As lead type forms a good substitute for lead pencil, and I had any amount of paper at command, the material for a protracted correspondence was abundant. The only difficulty was how to transmit a note to my beloved. Here was where my genius came in. Rolling a bit of paper into a hard ball, I stuck it on the sharp point of my bodkin (an awl-like tool used in correcting proofs, etc.), and by sheer dint of practice I acquired the knack of propelling this paper pellet to any distance by merely giving it a sharp fillip with the middle finger of the right hand, after the manner of one playing at 'shove-pin.'

For a whole week I practised this novel mode of shooting in my cell, and on the next Saturday I wrote a short note, clapped it on my bodkin, and attracted the attention of Juliet. I fired off the *billet doux* from my window, and had the satisfaction of seeing it fly through the open casement across the street, where Juliet at once pounced upon it. This was a triumph of art, and led me to attempt a more ambitious flight on the following Saturday afternoon.

The first note was a mere *ballon d'essai*, sent up to discover which way the wind blew in Juliet's mind. Encouraged by her manifest appreciation of the ingenuity displayed, I made up my mind to send her a long letter on that day, for which purpose I took the needful material to my cell on the Friday evening.

When the cells were all locked up for the night, and the day officials had gone home, leaving only one patrol and a principal warder on duty, I set to work on my love-letter. Alas! does the course of true love ever run smooth? I had only got halfway through my missive when my cell-door was suddenly opened, and the two officials walked into my cell. Of course the 'gaff was blown' at once. All the precious material was seized, and next morning I stood before the Governor, charged with carrying on an illicit correspondence with some person outside the prison. Who this person was became the burning question of the hour, and all sorts of inducements were held out to me with the view of eliciting the desired information. But, of course, it was all to no purpose. I would say nothing more than this: 'You have got me, and you can do what you like with me. I know nothing about anyone else.' The governor had some doubts as to the charge made, and treated the matter as a minor breach of discipline only. I was punished by being put on bread-and-water rations for one day, and (unkindest cut of all) was informed that I should be removed from the printers' shop.

It chanced that I was then within a fortnight

I had only got half-way through my missive when my cell-door was suddenly opened

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of my release. When that happy day arrived I went home, dressed myself up in my best, and, like a true knight, at once sought my lady love. I did not know the lady's name, nor even the number of the house in which she lived. But taking my bearings from the position of the prison workshop, as seen from Market Street, I went up to the door and asked to see a round, fresh-faced girl of about nineteen. I found that I was talking to the girl's mother, who recognised me at once as the man she had seen at the window opposite. The girl herself was at business, but having armed myself with a letter intended for her, I asked the old lady to give it to her on her return. Having received an assurance that it would be duly delivered, I went home and awaited developments.

Within two months of that date the girl and I were married at St. Clement's Church, Barnsbury, in view of that very prison where this strange love affair originated.

Such is my love story as it stands in my diary, and, in view of the sequel, I have again to deplore the necessity imposed upon me by the law of veracity to give a narrative so full of dramatic interest a very prosaic ending. But the truth must be told. Romeo and Juliet are at this moment living within arm's reach of each other, but there is a seemingly impassable gulf between them; and it may be that Romeo has himself been the principal factor in bringing about this painful alienation.

Another memorable event occurred during this twelve months' sentence. It was at Pentonville

that I found my wife, and it was at the same place that I heard of the terrible death of my only sister. As stated in a former chapter, I had arranged that my sister should accompany my mother back to Manchester, but she was an invalid, suffering from, I believe, some kind of nerve disease. The doctor whom I called in to treat her advised me to have her sent away, or into a hospital, where she would receive that special treatment which was necessary to one so afflicted but wholly impossible for me to provide at home. Reluctantly enough I was persuaded to allow her removal to the Mile End Union Infirmary, where she was at the time I was working out my twelve months' sentence at Pentonville. As a prisoner was only allowed to write at long intervals, I was not kept posted up in her hospital life, and knew nothing as to her then actual condition until I was one day brought before the governor, who apologized for not having informed me earlier of a fact which had been communicated to him by a letter, which, he regretted to say, had somehow or another got mislaid.

I do not suppose for a moment that this alleged mislaying of a letter was the result of culpable negligence on the part of any of the prison officials. So far from that being the case, I fancy that it was the outcome of a considerate solicitude on the part of the governor himself to avoid giving a shock to a prisoner who was then under medical treatment in the infirmary. Anyhow, on being called into his office, the governor expressed a regret that 'a *letter containing* some sad news' had been mislaid,

and only just then been discovered. When I heard the words 'sad news,' my thoughts immediately and instinctively flew to the Mile End Infirmary, and I braced myself up, clenched my teeth, dug my finger-nails into the palms of my hands, and prepared to hear the worst.

Thank God I did not hear the worst then! Had I done so, I do not think that I could have survived the blow. The governor merely informed me that my dear and only sister was dead. It was not until I had regained my freedom, some five months later, that the whole dreadful story came to my ears—the poor girl was burned to death in the Mile End Union Infirmary!

But it is high time that I turned from family matters, and took to more impersonal concerns. When I had got fairly well settled down in the new printing-office, and things got into working order, I found to my dismay that the deputy-governor was an amateur printer, and loved above all things to see, read, and correct a 'proof.' No matter how insignificant or simple the job I had in hand might be—were it only a 'locking-up ticket'—this gentleman would insist upon revising the proof before the work was printed off on the only press—an antiquated 'Columbian,' which had done duty for at least fifty years—the printing-office contained. The consequence was that, as the deputy had other duties to perform, and was not able to run up to my case every half-hour to see that nothing was printed off until he had inspected his darling 'proof,' the work got sadly in arrear, and I got hauled over the coals.

One Saturday morning the deputy came to me and said:

'I want you to set up this (a special 'rule' or 'by-law'), and, mind, send me down the proof before you have it printed.'

I sent the proof down before noon that day, but the deputy was not to be found, and the warder left it on his office table. On the following Monday morning the chief clerk, for whom this particular order was intended, sent up to the shop to know why the printed matter had not been delivered on the Saturday.

'Well, sir,' said I, 'the deputy has had the proof sent to his office, and it has not been returned.'

'Oh! What has the deputy got to do with it?'

'Can't say, sir. He has instructed me to let him see a proof of everything before it is put on the press.'

'Oh, has he? Print off that thing at once. Never mind the proof; I suppose it is all correct.'

The order was executed there and then. But before it was sent down to the clerk's office the deputy walked into the shop with the proof in his hand, and instructed me to make the corrections marked upon it.

'I am afraid nothing can be done with this now, sir,' quoth I.

'How is that?' said the Captain.

'The thing has already been printed and sent to the chief clerk, sir.'

'Didn't I tell you to send the proof to me in each *case before* printing?'

'Yes, sir. But the clerk told me to do the thing at once, as he was waiting for it.'

'The clerk? Who is governor here?'

It happened that the governor was away on leave at the time, and, of course, the deputy reigned in his stead. There was no getting over *his* instructions, and I felt that I had in a way transgressed. But as my transgression was owing to the clerk, I was justified in placing the onus of the thing on his shoulders.

What passed between the deputy and the clerk I was in complete ignorance of, but I heard next day that there was a very warm discussion in the governor's office about this matter, and within a month the clerk sent in his resignation to the Home Office. The deputy-governor had really gone out of his way, and may have been snubbed by the powers at Whitehall. Anyhow, I was not again required to send a proof of every little pettifogging job to his office, and, so far as I know, Captain C. never afterwards took the least interest in the printing department.

As illustrating the attitude of the prison authorities in connection with prisoners' correspondence at that time, I may mention an incident which occurred before I left the prison. Being anxious to write a letter to my brother, but not being entitled to do so by the rules, I asked the deputy to allow me a special letter, a privilege which that gentleman had the power to grant, but he never seemed willing to exercise it.

In the course of a long conversation which he

allowed] me to have with him on that occasion, I ventured to suggest that both public and private interests would be better served if greater facilities were allowed for intercommunication between prisoners and their families. The deputy could not endorse this view of things. 'Imprisonment would be no punishment at all if those imprisoned were allowed to write letters to their friends whenever they chose to do so.'

Such were the views then entertained, and when we remember that in the case of a man sentenced to penal servitude a period of six months from the date of his sentence had to elapse before he was entitled to write a letter, one can easily understand that, apart from the hardships imposed upon unoffending persons outside, such restrictions upon free intercourse furnished an open door to those—and their name is legion—who are ever ready to supplement their narrow income by trafficking with prisoners able to pay for whatever they might desire.

Happily, a better state of things now exists in all prisons. Rule 72, Section 3, provides that: 'A convicted prisoner, after two months of the term of his sentence have expired, shall, provided his conduct and industry have been satisfactory, be allowed to communicate with his relatives and respectable friends by letter, and to be visited by them in the prison; and this privilege shall be gradually increased, according to his conduct and *industry*, until the interval shall be reduced to one *month*.' . . .

CHAPTER XIV

'FROM the slums *to* the slums' might be written over the portals of every gaol in England. When I was undergoing that twelve months' imprisonment at 'the Ville' I must have conversed with at least a hundred prisoners, and the thing that impressed me most during that time was the connection which exists between homelessness and crime. The entry made at the time in my vade-mecum stands thus:

'The relationship between the common lodging-house and the gaol is almost one of cause and effect.'

'Where do you put up when you are outside?' was the problem I put before one of the most respectable of the nine men working with me in the printing-office.

'Oh, anywhere—generally in the Kip.'

'In what?'

'The Kip.'

'Where's that?'

'Why, in Holborn.'

'How much do you pay a week?'

'Fivepence a night, and if I ain't got the brass I've to put up how I can.'

'Then I suppose you have a more comfortable doss here than you have outside?'

'I should think so. That's why I come here. You don't get a good shake-down at the Kip, and you do here, and when I've been on the booze a bit I come here for a drag, and I'm all right afterwards.'

This is an epitome of criminal history worthy of the pen of Carlyle or Ruskin, and one might multiply *ad lib.* similar instances bearing out my contention that the common lodging-house is the stepping-stone to the gaol, and that no more fertile source of criminality exists than homelessness.

We had in the book-binding department a middle-aged man named Darcy, who was, I believe, a disciple of Mr. G. H——. Keen-witted, intelligent, and, according to his own statement, of decent parentage, this man was an avowed agnostic, and had the utmost contempt for Scriptural authority—indeed, I one day caught him in the act of kicking a copy of the Bible, which had been sent for repair, around the shop; and when I tried to show him how absurdly ridiculous a performance of that kind was he replied:

'Oh, don't prate to me! It is the like of you that keeps the like of this alive. When I go home the old woman will have a Bible—which she may have pinched for all I know—ready for me.'

'What, to read?'

'No, to light my pipe with.'

Later on I got at the secret of this man's folly. The 'home' he spoke about was a common lodging-*house in* Spitalfields; and, referring to my notes,

I find an entry which should be reproduced here as being suggestive of a course which should long ago have been taken.

'The necessity for an alteration in the licensing of common lodging-houses. This will open up the whole subject of the concentration of criminals for police purposes, a thing most prolific in suffering and crime.'

But to return to history. Amongst my most intimate acquaintances at 'the Ville' was a gentleman whom I described at the time as 'an epicurean octogenarian.' That he was a disciple of Epicurus I know, but I am not quite certain as to his antiquity, and, as a matter of fact, I do not remember ever having seen a man so alert, active, and vivacious as this man, who had passed three score years and ten. The great trouble of his life was not the loss of liberty, but the loss of appetite, and I have heard him describe for hours the delicate viands which, as manager of the —— Theatre, he was accustomed to, and which now, alas! he had to bid farewell to for eighteen months.

'Love venison?' replied he to a query I put to him one day—'love venison? Rather. Fancy Frascati's or Gatti's to-night!'

Then would we have the menu at this and that establishment, served up with a refinement of expression so effective that one has often felt inclined to exclaim:

> 'Oh, shades of Epicurus, do not shock me.
> Visions of veal and turtle-soup, don't mock me.'

Through some absurd whim which led him to toast his bread by holding it over the gas in his cell he got into trouble one night, and was removed to another cell, where the gas was outside instead of inside. This, even to a young man, is a trying punishment in midwinter, when the temperature is almost at freezing-point. But to an octogenarian it must have been particularly severe, and I was not at all surprised to hear that before he had been two days in his new quarters he smashed up everything in his cell for the purpose of being sent to 'chokee' for a long time, and thus escape the cold. For, odd as it may appear, the punishment cells are far more habitable in cold weather than the ordinary cells.

In the same ward as the octogenarian we had a literary critic. I fancy the man was not quite sound in the upper works, as he frequently flew off at a tangent in discussing matters of general interest, and tried to pin his auditor's attention to some personal matter which was of no earthly importance to anyone but himself. Unfortunately, this man's criticisms were not always confined to literature, and he was constantly getting into scrapes on account of what he used to call a 'latitude of expression.' This 'latitude' brought him into the longitude of the punishment cells no less than forty-seven times in the course of a single year, and he one day told me that he would much rather be in 'chokee' than in his ward.

Visited by the chaplain one Saturday afternoon, this criminal critic treated the reverend gentleman to some of his original 'criticisms,' and was reported

on the following Monday for insolence. I chanced to be outside the office door, and heard a most entertaining dialogue, of which the following is a fair sample :

THE GOVERNOR. What have you to say? You have long been a source of annoyance to everyone here, and I intend to put you back for others to deal with you.

THE CRITIC. You can put me back or put me forward, as you like, but you won't shut me up. I shall say——

THE GOVERNOR. Remove him.

THE CRITIC. Come on, removables. I've been moved hither ; remove me hence, and——

At this point the critic was forcibly ejected from the office, and again lodged in ' chokee,' where he remained for nearly a month. The worst part of the business was that, as the governor was in a very bad humour when I entered the office, my application, which was a very common one, was refused, thus illustrating the truth of Governor H.'s statement to me on a former occasion : ' You have to blame your own class for one-half of the restrictions you are now under. Prisoners' ill-use of privileges has led to those privileges being taken away from them.'

There was, however, only one privilege that I really cared for, and that was the privilege of keeping my diary—resumed shortly after my arrival at ' the Ville.' I was one day engaged in filling up the previous week's record, when the chaplain came to my cell and asked me to read some of my shorthand notes to him. I felt rather timid about com-

plying with the request, as the matter then on my slate referred to his own department, and I was not quite sure how he might take it. The reverend gentleman, however, put me at ease by taking the slate in his own hands and reading a few lines.

'Your phonography is not as good as it might be, but it will improve with practice. What do you mean by saying that "the spiritual pabulum usually furnished by prison chaplains is, etc., etc., etc."? What is it?'

'I would much rather not discuss the matter with you, sir. I have only the Pilatic answer to give—"What I have written I have written."'

'Oh, very well. Good-morning.'

This show of civility, where no kindness lies at the bottom of it, has ever been a fruitful source of annoyance to me. It irritates me, and I have often felt inclined to resent it. But no valedictory salutation was ever so welcomed by me as that 'Good-morning.' It relieved me from the presence of one to whom I should not like to have given offence, but who was, none the less, a nuisance.

Apart from the emoluments—or, as some would have it, the 'unearned increments'—the chaplaincy of a prison must be a very unlovable post. The chaplain is bound by law to see any prisoner who may take it into his head to solicit an interview, and although the reverend gentleman may have a genuine desire to help the man who thus calls upon him, he is cribbed, cabined, and confined within certain limits, which it would be more than his office is worth to overstep.

Rule 57 defines the position of a prison chaplain, and shows that he may go so far and no farther than the length of his tether, which, as far as local prisons are concerned, is simply this :

'The chaplain shall conform to the rules and regulations of the prison, and shall not interfere with the working of them as regards the safe custody, discipline, and labour of the prisoners, but shall support the governor in the maintenance thereof.'

'Conform to the rules and regulations,' and 'not interfere with the working of them.' There we have the whole thing in a nutshell. Little or no discretionary power is given to the man who is supposed to be responsible for the spiritual well-being of those in his care.

'I am as much a prisoner as you are,' said a warder to me one day. 'I rise earlier than you, I work longer than you, and I go to bed later than you. The only difference between us is that I can walk out of the gate at certain hours and you can't. So far as money matters go, you are better off than I am, and, on the whole, I think your position is better than mine.'

That is, no doubt, the general impression on the minds of subordinate prison officials, who are an overworked and underpaid body of public servants.

Before my twelve months had expired I was visited (officially) by the chaplain, who desired to know whether or not I intended to join the Prisoners' Aid Society. I told the reverend gentleman that I should be glad to join any society which was likely to be helpful.

'Very well. I shall send in your name to the Royal Society at Charing Cross, and no doubt they will find you suitable employment.'

On my release from Pentonville I went to Charing Cross, but beyond a very good cup of coffee and some bread and butter they could not help in any way. 'There are so many coming here; it is impossible to find work for you all.' Such was the reply to my application for employment at No. 32, Charing Cross.

I was, to be sure, in a better position than most applicants, as I had got something definite before me—the position of compositor was always open to me, had my sight been good enough to admit of my working at the 'case' without glasses. But, unfortunately for me, I had then almost lost the use of my left eye, which, like my left ear, became what Mr. Augustus Sala called 'a duffer.' I could not even read a newspaper on my discharge from Pentonville, and I had therefore to find my livelihood by some out-of-door employment.

My diary will show what followed:

'Mr. T. introduces me to editor of *East London Guardian*. Employed as reporter and advertisement canvasser at £1 per week. Sixteen months' experience of East End journalism. Police courts, sessions, and coroner's court. How Messrs. Rag, Tag, and Bobtail evade the law. What is a criminal? What is a prostitute? East London's reply to those questions. "Jack the Ripper" and his doings. A visit to Thrawl Street, Berners Street, and Vine *Street.* Police complicity in "Whitechapel horrors"

absurd. The real facts as to Sir Charles Warren's retirement. Domestic troubles arise. A rift in the lute. Unhappy contretemps with F. and what it led to.

'Collapse of *East London Guardian*. Again in Queer Street. The great truth that restrictions, privations, etc., long imposed from without, drive men to the opposite point—swing of pendulum—exemplified. Up to this time more sinned against than sinning. Now became reckless, and for second time deliberately committed myself. God help us!

'Troubled days and restless nights. Truly, no rest for the wicked man. The worm that dieth not. A leap that was not made in the dark. A little cheque, and what came of it. But still, Voltaire notwithstanding, "il faut vivre," and then, again, is it not true that "l'appetit vient en mangeant"?

'Sink deeper in the mire, and, literally, try to "outrun the constable." The *Police Gazette* and the management thereof. Hue and Cry. Arrested and remanded to Holloway. Domiciliary visit by police. Seizure of all MSS.—a wholly unjustifiable but very common practice. [Will the said police kindly inform present writer what the deuce they have done with said MSS.?]

'Dished. Committed to C.C.C. (Central Criminal Court). Mr. Justice A. L. Smith and the prosecuting barrister. A scene in court. "Nine calendar months with hard labour." Back to "Model Prison" once more.'

CHAPTER XV

On being once more brought to the 'Model Prison,' two things forced themselves upon my attention. The first was the very marked improvement which I noticed in the composition of the prison staff, and the second was the improvement noticeable in the general treatment of prisoners—phenomena which probably stood in the relationship of cause and effect. The military 'head' had disappeared, and a civilian reigned in his stead; *ergo*, a more civilized order of things prevailed. Indeed, so marked were the improvements made there since my previous visit that I feel justified in saying that Pentonville attained the meridian of its 'respectability' in the early days of 1892. The advance was not a merely local one; it was general. If the prison officials were a superior order of mortals, such, also, were the inmates, or, at least, as many of them as I was enabled to converse with, for as I was during the whole of that sentence cribbed, cabined, and confined so much that I could not get beyond the infirmary wards, my sphere of observation was a rather limited one.

Limited as it was, some remarkable criminals came within it, and one of the earliest was Captain *V., at that* time the most popular of south Metro-

politan members. I first became acquainted with the hon. gentleman's name in a rather dramatic way, and, as I made a note of the occurrence shortly afterwards, I will repeat it here in full:

'Leaving Notting Hill Railway-station, I invested a penny in my then favourite paper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and found therein the following sensational item of news:

'"A great commotion was last night made in the House of Commons, when it became known that warrants had been issued for the arrest of two Hon. Members, who are charged with an indictable offence."'

This extraordinary announcement excited such a degree of curiosity in my mind that, instead of going straight home, I hailed a hansom, and directed the Jehu to land me as quickly as possible at the office of a London evening paper, with which an old friend of mine was connected at that time. As I reached the office I caught sight of him leaving the building with some other press men. Of course, I at once buttonholed him, and, showing him the paragraph in the *Gazette*, asked him who the two hon. members were, and what the 'indictable offence' mentioned might be.

With his usual benign smile, Mr. R. replied:

'My dear boy, I know you to be possessed with the philosophical spirit of inquiry—a spirit I always like to encourage. I shall therefore gratify your curiosity. But tell it not in Gath, nor publish it in the streets of Askelon until to-morrow, when all the world and his wife shall learn all about it.'

As I promised to keep the information a profound secret for the next twenty-four hours, my friend informed me that the delinquents were Captain V., then Member for B., and Mr. Jabez Spencer Balfour, speculator and philanthropist. I shall have to deal with the prison life of the latter gentleman when the course of my narrative brings me to the Isle of Wight. The Captain comes in at this point.

Shortly after my return to Pentonville I was placed in the hospital wards as a cleaner, and on going down a corridor one morning I caught sight of a prisoner who struck me at once as being of a better class than the majority of prisoners belonged to. Beside the bed upon which he was lying lay a wooden leg, and as I had not seen him before, I had not the least idea as to his identity. Some of my fellow-cleaners, however, appeared to be conversant with the gentleman's history, and assured me that they could tell me 'all abaat him.' Sure enough, I heard all 'abaat' Captain V. that same afternoon, and I am pleased to say that he allowed me to have many pleasant conversations with him subsequently.

Whenever any prisoner enjoys immunities not shared by other prisoners, there is always a large number amongst the latter ready to make mince-meat of the man whom they suppose to be specially favoured. I do not know of any other institution in the country wherein 'envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness' exist to anything like the same extent as they do in a prison. Is that not symptomatic of something worthy the consideration *of the* powers that be ?

Well, because Captain V. was allowed to do very much as he pleased with himself and his wooden —I beg the limb's pardon—cork leg, he was the daily recipient of no very polite compliments from a host of fellow-sinners. One brutal bully made a point of going to the lavatories at an hour when he knew the Captain's cell would be open, and as he passed by the cell-door would cry out :

'Hey, you old d——! how is your game-leg? You ought to be pole-axed.'

The Captain, however, was too much of a gentleman to take notice of such insults, and I fancy that, on the whole, he fared better than he would have done had he put up his back and complained to the governor. His mild manners seemed to act as a sedative on the minds of many of his persecutors, and after a time he almost became popular.

We had another inmate of the infirmary who never became popular, although he did his level best to court popularity. This was the Hon. E. E., the head and front of whose offending was that the medical officer allowed him some trifling luxuries in the way of wine and brandy, which were, no doubt, necessary for his ailment, but which some others did not receive. With the exception of a certain 'noble lord' and another distinguished prisoner, both of whom I left behind me at Parkhurst, I never knew any prisoner so mauled and abused as the young aristocrat just referred to. During the whole six months I was cleaner in the infirmary no other prisoner suffered half as much, and it was not until I complained to the authorities

myself that the poor fellow experienced anything like peace. The nest of vipers who seemed to have obtained a footing in the hospital was, however, gradually cleared out, and when I left the place was comparatively free from tyranny of that kind.

An elderly gentleman who had once taken a very active part in local politics, and was in hopes of being elected for one of the parliamentary divisions of Surrey, was another of my co-sufferers at 'the Ville' during my nine months' imprisonment. Like Wilkins Micawber, this gentleman was always on the *qui vive*, literally living from day to day on that hope which is said to 'spring eternal in the human breast.' Something was always going to turn up which would reinstate him in that distinguished position to which he had been obliged to bid farewell.

There was, indeed, in his case a long farewell to all his greatness, since he was re-arrested at the prison gates on leaving Pentonville, taken to Windsor, where he was 'wanted' by the police, and got another long term of imprisonment, this time for bigamy.

As the practice of re-arresting a man whose sentence has expired, and putting him on his trial for some former offence (known to the court when he was sentenced) has over and over again elicited some very strong criticisms from several judges of the High Court, I shall give here a brief account of my own experience, when, on the expiration of the nine months passed upon me in 1891, and referred to at the close of the last chapter, I was *re-arrested* at the gate of Pentonville, and informed

that I should be taken to Greenwich on an old warrant. The detective-sergeant who was told off to effect my capture and escort me to the Greenwich Police Station was a very humane man, and though I might easily have slipped through his fingers had I been so inclined, I was impressed by his sympathetic demeanour, and could not—much as I yearned for freedom—bring myself to take advantage of him.

Wherefore I was soon landed in the dock at Greenwich and charged with an offence committed a year previously, before I had suffered the nine months' imprisonment at 'the Ville.' The magistrate (Mr. Marsham), on hearing that I had just completed that term of imprisonment, had a long consultation with his clerk, and then, addressing me, he said:

'It may be that the nine months just served covered the offence you are now charged with. I shall write the Home Office to ascertain if that is so, and in the meantime you will be remanded to Holloway for a week.'

On the following week I was again brought up, and, when the case was called, Mr. Marsham informed me that, as the result of a communication from the Home Office, I should be simply bound over in my own recognizance for £5 to come up for judgment if called upon, and I was there and then released.

I fared much worse some six months later, when, being unable to get any permanent employment—the one thing an ex-convict, above all men, needs,

but can rarely get—I again had recourse to illegalities, and finding the police at my heels in London, went from one provincial town to another, until I finally fell into their hands at Leicester. I had previously visited Derby and Nottingham, and being wholly unable—not unwilling, but unable—to get any sort of work which I could safely take up in view of the warrant then already out for me in London, I 'raised the wind' by forging cheques, upon not one of which had I ever received more than £3, and in the majority of cases not more than 20s. When arrested at Leicester, the police informed me that they had at least twenty different charges against me, but that they would select four (the maximum number upon which any accused person is indicted), and I was committed to the Leicester Assizes upon those four charges.

When the judge (Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams) took his seat on the Bench, I was brought before him and called upon to plead. I, of course, pleaded guilty—I had no earthly defence beyond 'circumstances,' which, though they may extenuate (and should extenuate), are yet no valid excuse for crime. Asked what I had to say, I handed up a written statement of facts, borne out by letters, which I also sent up to the Bench. After a little consideration of the MSS. his lordship said he would postpone sentence until the end of the Assizes, and I was taken back to Leicester Gaol.

At the end of five days I was once more placed in the dock, and Mr. Justice Williams administered a *severe* castigation, but wound up by saying that,

as he had made inquiries and found the statement made in my paper true, he would merely send me to prison for four calendar months on all the charges —a sentence which took everyone by surprise, as the offence was a serious one, the charges against me were numerous, and I had already been in penal servitude twice. Under such circumstances it was only natural (as things then were) that all, including myself, should have anticipated a sentence of at least ten years' penal servitude. To a prisoner who expects a long term of penal servitude four months' imprisonment is a mere fly-blow, and as I was placed in the book-binding shop that term passed quickly enough; and about the fag-end of 1893 I was released from Leicester Gaol.

But just as I was passing through the gates two detectives approached, and, without showing me any authority whatever for their action, required me to accompany them to the Town Hall, where I was informed that an officer was coming from Derby to bring me back with him on a warrant. Next day I was charged before the Mayor of Derby with having been guilty of one of those offences which I had enumerated in the paper handed to Mr. Justice Williams at the Leicester Assizes four months previously, and which the police had then informed his lordship of. The Mayor, being a local magnate only, and possibly unaware of the fact that the decision of a judge of the High Court carried the same weight and was as far-reaching as the Queen's Writ, treated the case as an ordinary one, and committed me for trial at the ensuing

assizes. For a full month I lay in Derby Gaol, and at the end of that time Mr. Justice Charles opened the assizes. Of course, every facility was afforded me during that month to prepare my defence, and on a Saturday morning I was placed in the dock and charged with the offence which I had voluntarily admitted in my address to Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams at Leicester, and which, no doubt, he had duly considered when passing sentence.

When the case had been gone into, and the usual question, 'What have you to say?' was put by the clerk, I handed him a carefully written paper, which I had prepared in the interim. When Mr. Justice Charles read it, he exclaimed:

'No, no, no! I have had to complain of this kind of thing before. I think it most unfair that this man should have been re-arrested on this charge, as it is evident that my learned brother was cognizant of it when he sentenced him at Leicester. Who is responsible for this prosecution?'

A barrister rose and said that he was instructed by the Treasury, and that it was a police prosecution. There were a number of other cases against the prisoner, and he hoped his lordship would settle the matter at once, so that the prisoner might not be again arrested after that particular case had been dealt with.

'I *shall* settle the matter. The prisoner is discharged, and should he be again arrested in connection with any of these cases, I shall disallow the cost of this prosecution.'

The barrister again rose, and pledged himself

that no further action would be taken in the matter.

'Further action' *was* taken that same (Saturday) evening, when I was handed over to a detective, who had come all the way from Nottingham for the purpose of bringing me back to that town on one of the same charges which Mr. Justice Charles had given such a strong expression of opinion about, and in reference to which the barrister representing the Treasury had pledged himself that they should not again be revived! From Saturday night till the following Monday morning I lay in the Nottingham Guildhall, and about noon on that day was charged before the stipendiary magistrate and formally committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions, which, happily, opened on that very morning.

As, in the ordinary course of the Midland circuit, the judge proceeds from Derby to Nottingham, I was naturally anxious that I should be brought before Mr. Justice Charles, who was to visit the town on the following day (Tuesday). But the magistrate, acting on the advice of the police, would not consent to this, and I was consequently brought before the Recorder (the Hon. Chandos Leigh). When asked to plead, I declined to do so on the ground that I had already been punished for the offence I was then charged with. The Recorder, who, of course, knew nothing of what had occurred at Derby, put the case back till evening, and this gave me an opportunity of writing a statement, which I gave to his lordship when again brought before him. Some gentleman in court—who he was I

know not—stepped up to the Bench when the case was called on, and handed the judge a long slip of paper, which seemed to produce a favourable impression. His lordship rose from the Bench, called his clerk and the governor of the prison (who was standing by me in the dock) to his private room, and for fully fifteen minutes the ordinary business of the court was suspended whilst the big-wigs were adjudicating upon my case *in camera*. At the end of that time the governor came to my side and advised me to plead guilty to the charge, saying that if I did so I should only get one week's imprisonment. Whilst he was still talking the Recorder emerged from his private room, and exclaimed: 'A day—a day!' I knew what that meant, and at once pleaded guilty. Within ten minutes I was walking along the streets of Nottingham a free man, having thrice been arrested by the police in contravention of judicial instructions.

CHAPTER XVI

I HAVE always desired to give credit to the police for doing their duty, and in my criminal career I have seldom had occasion to complain of any excess of duty on the part of the metropolitan force. But I must say that after my release at Nottingham the police of that town displayed more zeal than discretion. About the middle of June, 1894, things became so warm for me that, although I had a good situation as advertisement canvasser in the town, I seriously contemplated leaving a place in which I had spent the happiest six months of my life.

The landlord of a beerhouse situated next door to my residence happened to be a detective who had been interested in my prosecution at Derby. Finding that I was anxious to secure the services of a smart man to assist me in canvassing, he sent me a young fellow, who turned out to be what is known as a 'policeman's nose' (*i.e.*, a decoy, or, rather, a 'plotter of plots'). This man weaved his web so cleverly that before I had him in my employment three months I became entangled, and, as he suddenly disappeared, I was accused of conspiring with him to obtain advertisements under false pretences, and was sent to the assizes on two charges.

The late Baron Pollock presided, and when, late on a Friday night, the jury returned a verdict of 'Not guilty on the first indictment,' his lordship, who had, of course, my criminal record before him, appeared to be very impatient at the finding, and gave instructions that another jury should be empanelled, upon which not one of the twelve men who had decided the first case should sit.

I do not suggest that this second jury was 'picked,' but it must have been very much influenced by the unfavourable remarks of the judge, who, keeping the damning record on the bench in front of him, expressed himself very freely now and again; and, as I had to conduct my own defence, he often placed me at a disadvantage by not allowing certain questions put to the witnesses. The summing-up of the case by his lordship settled it. I was found guilty, and sentenced to eighteen calendar months' imprisonment, a sentence which I duly worked out in the county gaol at Bagthorpe.

Among those tried at the same assizes were three men and a woman, all charged with a murderous assault on the police. Found guilty, they were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from six to twenty-two months, the latter sentence being passed upon an extremely rough desperado known throughout the Midlands as 'Doggy.' With innumerable convictions against him, mainly for poaching and acts of violence, this man had been tried at a previous assize on a charge of murder, and had escaped the gallows by a mere fluke. On being taken to Bagthorpe, 'Doggy' at once set about

perpetuating his reputation for violence, and in this pursuit he was no respecter of persons. Savage himself, his greatest pleasure was to contemplate the savagery of others, and his criticism upon the shocking tragedy at Sutton Coldfield—a tragedy which sent a thrill of horror throughout the northern and midland counties—was, I thought at the time, the most brutal thing of its kind I had ever heard.

The ward in which I was located was one day filed up, preparatory to going out to exercise in the yards. In the rear rank and immediately behind me stood the redoubtable 'Doggy,' who suddenly exclaimed:

'By h——! We've got the finest slasher I've ever heard of come last night. Oh, he's a champion!'

'What did he do?' queried someone standing near.

'Do? Why, he took to his old landlady, but she'd 'ave nowt to do with him. When he comes 'ome on Saturday night, he finds 'em all abed bar the old woman, who's in the kitchen. Gettin' a rope, he tied the door-handles of two bedrooms where lodgers slept, so as they couldn't get out and disturb him at the job he had on 'and. Then, going to one bed where three of the old woman's kids lay asleep, he well-nigh cut off their bloomin' 'eads from their bodies, and then, goin' down to the kitchen, he tackled the old woman, and almost cut her up into bits. Arter that, he stands afore a glass and cuts his own throat. They bring him to at the 'ospital, and he is now going up for trial.

They put him in that corner cell last night. He's a fair champion !'

This 'fair champion' was subsequently hung at Bagthorpe, and here I may say that I was brought into contact with two of the three men (Wilson, Smith, and Tomlinson) who were executed at Bagthorpe Prison during my eighteen months' confinement there. As cleaner for the ward in which the condemned cell (which in most prisons is about the size of two ordinary cells) was situated, it was part of my duty to visit it three times daily to discharge sundry domestic offices for the occupant. In doing this I gained a practical knowledge of the way in which a prisoner detained on the capital charge is treated before trial and after it.

The man Smith, mentioned above, was charged with wife murder, and while awaiting trial was kept in the condemned cell under the vigilant observation of two warders, who never left him during the day until their places were taken by two others, who sat awake all night on chairs in his cell. Before trial Smith retained his own clothes, and had his meals supplied to him from without. With these exceptions he was subject to the ordinary rules of the prison. On being taken away for trial at the assize court—a distance of some two miles—I had to give the cell a thorough clearing out, and while I was thus engaged the chief warder came into it and requested me to give my best attention to the bedclothes, 'as,' said he, 'I fully expect to see Smith back again to-day.'

Late that night, and when the whole of the in-

mates had been in bed for some hours, Smith was brought back to the prison under sentence of death. His own clothes were taken from him, and he was dressed in the prison garb. From that moment the regimen was different from what it had been in many important particulars. Without being actually bound in the old Roman fashion to his gaoler's body, he always had a warder—more frequently two—at his elbow. His food, which consisted of plain bread and butter, with tea or coffee for breakfast; roast and two vegetables, with bread, for dinner; tea, as at breakfast, and a tin of hot gruel, porridge, or milk for supper, was served from the prison kitchen. The privilege of beer and tobacco (one pint of beer daily and 2 ounces of tobacco with pipe weekly) was offered on recommendation of the medical officer, but was declined by Smith, who, under the chaplain's private ministrations, became very 'religiously and devoutly disposed.'

It is a common thing, when a prisoner is lying under sentence of death, for the governor or chaplain to be inundated with books, papers, and all kinds of religious literature, sent by a certain class, who mean well, but are ignorant of prison rules. Whole bundles of such literary contributions were received at Bagthorpe Prison gates, but few (if any) ever reached Smith.

I chanced to be cleaning the white stone steps in front of the cells one afternoon when the High Sheriff of the County arrived, and, accompanied by the governor, entered the condemned man's cell

(taking off his hat as he did so) to announce the date fixed for the execution. The ceremony was rather an impressive one, but it was made as brief as possible. As the fatal day approached, Smith, as I learned later, was longing for it. Certainly, one can well imagine what a relief it must have been to him on the morning of his execution to know that the miserable month which passed between the sentence and the execution of it was at last over.

At 6 a.m. on that morning I went, as usual, to his cell to collect supper-tin, serve fresh water, etc., and on coming from the door I saw a low-sized man, dressed in civilian clothing, and with a soft bowler hat in his hand, eagerly scanning the prisoner through one of the slits made in the cell walls to enable officials outside the cell to see what is going on within. That little man was Billington, the executioner, who was then taking the size of his man with the view of gauging the length of rope needed. Within two hours later the gate-bell began to toll; I heard a shuffling of feet near the condemned cell, and then, as the procession passed out into the yard, the voice of the chaplain was heard reading out some portion of the Burial Service. I never remember having felt so miserable in my life, and by the time I had been a few seconds on my knees in my cell, an ominous 'click,' followed by a slight creaking noise, was heard, and I knew that all was over. Smith had paid the last barbarous penalty of the law.

Thirty minutes later I went to his cell to clean it *up and* prepare it for its next tenant. On the table

lay a lump of white bread, the remains of the dead man's last meal on earth, while in a corner and on the floor—as if it had been thrown there hurriedly —lay Billington's soft bowler hat. On returning to my cell, I pulled up part of the flooring, and making a hole in the soil underneath, buried the piece of bread, writing on the white-washed wall immediately above it a suitable epitaph.

As I shall not again refer to the hanging process, and much misconception exists upon the subject of the exclusion of strangers on such occasions, I may state here that Rule 94 (Statutory Rules and Orders, 1899) enacts that:

'During the preparations for an execution and the time of the execution, no person shall enter the prison unless legally entitled to do so.'

Early in 1896 I was released from Bagthorpe Gaol, and returned to London, where my wife and child lived, and where I then wished to settle down. The destinies, however, would not have it so. Failing to find anything better, I again fell back upon the rather precarious calling of a newspaper canvasser. In addition to the ordinary disadvantages and disappointments of the work, I was not employed by the firm, but under private arrangements with the junior partner, and when that young gentleman went off suddenly upon a three months' tour, without making any arrangements by which I could draw my commission on orders obtained, I was left, at the very commencement of his holiday, without resources.

By all means in the world let us insist upon the

necessity of doing right, but before a man can do right, he must do *somehow*, and if the somehow be not exactly right (morally or legally), still, if it be a physical necessity—well, we know that such 'knows no law.' I am not defending the course I then took. I only wish to show the *raison d'être* of it. My employer, having gone forth to amuse himself, without dreaming, perhaps, that the gastric forces were as strong in mé and mine as in him and his, I still continued to hunt up advertisements for him, and not being able to get my commission on them at the office, I obtained payment for some of them (the average was the necessary £2 weekly and no more) from the advertisers themselves. On my employer's return, complaints as to the non-acknowledgment of monies paid reached him, and I heard that he intended to have me arrested for embezzlement. Indeed, the warrant was actually issued, when, seeing how stiffly matters would go with me if charged, I scraped all I could get together, and making arrangements to send my wife what I could weekly, I bolted to Birmingham. I soon found work there, and was about to bring down my wife and child from London, when I was one morning suddenly arrested while in bed, brought back to London, and, on January 11, 1897, sentenced at the Old Bailey to three years' penal servitude.

. . . Sentenced at the Old Bailey to three years' penal servitude

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CHAPTER XVII

FROM the day that the then Common Sergeant (Sir Forrest Fulton) sent me into penal servitude until the day that I was brought up from H.M. prison, Parkhurst, for release in London, I met a larger number of criminal celebrities, criminal oddities, and criminal 'unfortunates' than I had ever seen before during any one sentence.

To begin with the 'unfortunates,' there was one poor, emaciated little man named Dyson, who was indicted for the grave offence of burglary—an offence, by the way, which his pigmy stature and diseased organs rendered it hard to believe that he could have committed. The police may have been justified in the mode adopted to insure a conviction, but when recourse to other than ordinary methods is had by the prosecution in a police case, one doubts the soundness of the indictment. Anyhow, the one witness upon whom this man depended for his defence was put beyond the range of the witness-box, and a woman of very easy virtue was pressed into the service of the prosecutors.

Dyson was convicted, and when he wished to read out in open court a full statement of his defence, the presiding judge refused him permission to do

so, so that practically (whether the defence he had to make was good, bad, or indifferent, matters not) he was sentenced before he was heard, and that sentence was a heavy one—five years' penal servitude.

Misfortune seemed to dog this prisoner's footsteps from the first. He was undoubtedly very ill indeed when, a few days after sentence was passed, we were sent to 'the Scrubs' for a short time; and, as I occupied the next cell to his, and sympathized very much with him, I advised him to apply to see the medical officer. Next day that gentleman called, and on hearing Dyson complain of some internal ailment, he ordered him to strip, and proceeded to use the stethoscope. When he had completed his examination he exclaimed, 'There is nothing the matter with you. You are only shamming, and will be kept in your cell for three days.'

In the case of medical decisions, it is very foolish to withhold credit from any competent medical man, for his view is, no doubt, the right one, and I thought at the time that, after all, Dyson might have been shamming. An ounce of fact, however, is worth a ton of fiction. Within a fortnight Dyson and five others, including myself, were drafted from 'the Scrubs' to Chelmsford Gaol, and before a week had passed this man whom the doctor had reported as shamming illness was carried to the hospital, where he died a short time afterwards. At the coroner's inquest, which was held next day, the jury returned a verdict—which, I believe, was in strict accordance with the medical testimony made after *the post*-mortem examination—that the cause of

death was Bright's disease. The only question one is inclined to ask is, 'Was Bright's disease set up in two days?'

Another 'unfortunate' (although in a different line) tried and sentenced at the same sessions, was an old convict named Burton, who was indicted for stealing a pair of boots, valued 4s. 11½d., and was sent to prison for twelve calendar months. This man must have had a mania for shoe-leather, since he had fourteen previous convictions against him, and they were all, with but one exception, for stealing boots. He assured me that he had always on being released from prison tramped about for days, and sometimes for weeks, in quest of a job; that he had been refused admission to the casual ward on many occasions; and that his only diet for days had been the oats he stole from horses' nosebags! I believe that three different chaplains found him work on three different occasions, but when it was discovered—how these discoveries are made has always been a puzzle to me—that he had been in prison, he was either discharged, or the place was made so uncomfortable for him that he was obliged to resign. I am sorry to say that the man succumbed to the hardships he had experienced, and died miserably in a common lodging-house in East London about eleven months ago.

On the very day that nine fellow-sinners and myself were drafted from Chelmsford Gaol to Parkhurst Prison I saw another 'unfortunate,' whose face and figure is painfully present as I am writing these lines. It was in the cabin of the steamer

that carried us across the Solent, from Southampton to the Isle of Wight, that I first saw Harrison, who was then being transferred from Portland to Parkhurst Prison. On reaching the bottom of the steps leading from the deck to the cabin—which, by the way, contained a refreshment bar—H. called out for bottles of champagne! The unfortunate man was insane. Sane enough when sentenced to (I believe) five years' penal servitude, he was sent to Portland Prison, and before two years had elapsed he became a raving maniac.

I might go on multiplying instances of this kind, but they are really too painful to dwell long upon, and I shall therefore return to the point from which I started and describe my journey from Chelmsford Gaol to Parkhurst Prison.

There were, as I said, nine other prisoners, besides myself, in the brake which conveyed us from the gaol to the railway-station, and as I chanced to be the first man (in the order in which we went on to the station platform) on the long steel chain which tethered us to each other, I had, as it were, to lead the procession until we reached the waiting-room. As the platform was crowded with holiday-makers, all, no doubt, ready to enjoy themselves at any show coming in their way, we were at once surrounded by a gaping and grinning crowd, and it was only by tugging and dragging at those in the rear that we could all get along.

When we at last reached the waiting-room, the mob seemed desirous of following us, but by the aid *of police*, railway porters, and the escort of prison

officers, we managed to have the room wholly to ourselves. When the door closed upon the would-be sightseers, and our chief warder clapped his ample shoulders against it, to prevent the invasion by those British goths, they sent up a howl which might have been heard a mile off. Howl as they might, however, they could not reach us, as long as the chief had his broad back at the door.

Such was the position when, ten minutes later, the train steamed into the station, and we had perforce to leave our harbour of refuge, and once more face the curious crowd on the platform. As we tried to elbow our way to the reserved carriage which was specially set apart for our convenience, and into which none but our party could enter, the mob closed in upon us again, and I was struck by the appearance of one woman, who, though blind, made strenuous efforts to get near us. There she stood, with mouth wide open, as if she could perceive through that organ what the sightless eyes were unable to see. Oh, it was a pitiful sight, and as I dragged my fellow-sinners along the platform, I felt that she was the only one in that noisy crowd who really saw and sympathized with us.

The carriage was reached at last, and as I took my seat near the door I found myself face to face with one of the oddest of odd characters, who was then commencing a sentence of seven years' penal servitude. Of a good family, independent means, and a fair education, Roland B. conceived a passion for mechanical contrivances of all kinds. He loved a clock as though it were his own offspring, and for

an 'infernal machine' he had what one might call a morbid affection. In an unlucky moment he associated himself with a certain revolutionary faction which had its headquarters at Deptford, and, listening to the voice of this charmer, he was led to enter into a conspiracy which had for its object the demolition of governments and all other constituted authority.

When the French Government declined to entertain the numerous appeals made to save the life of the criminal who murdered President Carnot, the hair-brained fanatics of Deptford decided upon striking a blow at the powers that be on this side of the Channel, and as the postal department was considered to be part and parcel of the governmental system, Roland got some gunpowder, attached a fuse to it, and dropped the explosive into the local post-office letter-box. The actual damage done was but slight, and in all probabilities the perpetrator of this ridiculous fiasco might never have been discovered had he kept himself quiet. But it did not suit the whim of this 'arch conspirator' to keep quiet. He wanted a little cheap advertisement, and he had it, but he paid through the nose for it.

Seeing that the affair was likely to blow over without eliciting much public comment (the commodity he yearned after), he determined to pitchfork himself and his exploit into publicity, and wrote a letter to the postmaster, which eventually led to his arrest. The indictment was framed under the Explosives Act, and, after a long and very interesting trial, he was sentenced by Mr. Justice Bruce to

seven years' penal servitude. As I believed him to be the dupe of a very lawless faction which gloried in the name of 'Anarchist,' I sympathized with him when others shrank from him, and, as a consequence, he followed at my heels like a dog for some months. One could plainly see that his 'upper works' were all awry, and, as a result of representations made to the amiable governor of the prison (Colonel H. Plummer), his position was greatly improved.

The improvement, however, did not affect him materially, as he had a will of his own, and nothing could have reconciled him to his surroundings. For more than two years this man returned his daily dinner untouched, and as the dinner is the only substantial meal a convict gets, he was always hungry, and would have it that the authorities were starving him! It was to no purpose that I pointed out (as I often did) that he was starving himself. He would not as much as give me a hearing. Button-holing him one day I asked:

'Why don't you eat your dinners?'

'I can't; I have never eaten meat or soup in my life.'

'What! Are you a vegetarian?'

'No, but I never have eaten meat.'

'Why?'

'I really don't know, only I never have done so.'

There is no sense in arguing with a man who can adduce no better reason for his actions than that they are customary, and, consequently, I gave up the discussion, and left him to hug his delusions in

peace. Peace, however, was not at all to his liking. He wanted war, and war to the knife.

'I should like to blow up the whole bally place,' said he to me one day.

'Why ?' replied I.

'Because they are all a lot of tyrants and should not be allowed to live.'

'But suppose you killed a lot of innocent people who have never done you any harm, and who have as much right to live as you, how could you reconcile that with your conscience ?'

'Oh, conscience be hanged ! If you had any conscience you would not be here.'

I felt that, imbecile as he was, he had the best of the argument, and, beyond a few encouraging words, I never afterwards spoke to him. Many efforts were made to induce the Home Secretary to reconsider the very severe sentence passed upon this man for what, after all, was nothing more than a mad freak. But the same old stereotyped reply—'No grounds' —was sent back on every occasion. And I must admit that, exceptional as the circumstances were, the Home Office was quite justified, in the public interest, in refusing to entertain the various suggestions made by interested friends and relatives of a prisoner who openly avowed that he was an Anarchist.

CHAPTER XVIII

I HAD not been in Parkhurst very long ere I was brought face to face with the head of the 'Balfour group,' and it happened in this wise:

I was leaving the prison chapel one Sunday afternoon, after the usual Sunday service, when I noticed a low-sized and rather corpulent prisoner eying me intently from his seat in the choir. I had not seen him before, and was wondering who on earth he could be, and why he should gaze at me as he persisted in doing. For the moment I could not make head nor tail of him, but as we passed out of the chapel door a fellow-prisoner whispered in my ear, 'That is Balfour looking at you. Did you know him outside?'

Of course, I pleaded innocence of any such aristocratic acquaintance, but made up my mind at once to 'improve the shining hour.' On the following morning, when we were again leaving chapel, and I saw him once more stare at me with a strange, half-familiar expression in his look, I tried to summon up a smile, and made my best bow to him, for the which I very nearly got run into 'chokee' (*i.e.*, the punishment cells) there and then.

As a 'star man' (*i.e.*, a prisoner under first sen-

tence) Mr. Jabez Balfour was kept apart from ordinary prisoners, and he was therefore effectually shielded from the contaminating influences inseparable from the regular army of convicts on public works. With his friend and quondam legal adviser, Mr. Granville Wright, Balfour was sent to Parkhurst shortly after his conviction, but, for some occult reason, he was subsequently transferred to Portland Prison, where he had a rather rough time of it. I heard that his health gave way at that 'station,' and I do not wonder at it. Anyhow, he was (in 1898) transferred from Portland back to Parkhurst, on, I suspect, medical grounds, and was at once placed in No. 28 party—the tailoring gang. Although I could not get at him for conversational purposes, I saw him every morning, between 7.30 and 8.30 a.m., on the exercise-ground, taking the air.

Dressed in the ordinary knickerbocker suit of 'classic grey,' liberally besprinkled with that badge of infamy, the broad arrow, the ex-hon. member cut but a poor figure, and, to judge by appearances, the four years' confinement had told heavily upon him. He looked a little haggard and careworn, although he had not by any means lost much flesh. Subject to the ordinary prison régime, he enjoyed no immunities not possessed by any other prisoner unless it was in the matter of prison literature—a no small consideration for an educated prisoner. He rose at 5.20 a.m., cleaned up his cell, made up *his* bed, and, with a regularity only to be found in *prisons*, workhouses, and hospitals, sat down to his

breakfast at 6 a.m., his dinner at 11.45 a.m., and his supper at 5.45 p.m. daily.

Mr. Balfour was not considered by the medical authorities to be ill enough to warrant his removal to the hospital whilst I was at Parkhurst, but he was under medical treatment (as what we might call an 'out-door patient') for a very long time, and he appeared to be suffering from some affection of the back. Although isolated from the common herd, he was the constant butt of every noisy critic in the prison. Half-suppressed flouts, jibes, and jeers were daily poured out like water upon the hapless head of this luckless ex-M.P. Indeed, although his conduct was exemplary and he was treated with the greatest consideration by the heads of the establishment, he was the most unpopular man in the prison. Nothing seemed to be too harsh or bitter when the rag, tag, and bob-tail of the place opened its mouth in denunciation of the great Liberator engineer.

Whatever Balfour's guilt in connection with that gigantic fraud may have been, his punishment is unquestionably most severe. Fourteen years' penal servitude under such a rigorous system as ours is a dreadful punishment, even in the case of a young man enjoying good health; for a man like Balfour, who is well stricken in years and manifestly in indifferent health, it is a crushing sentence. But the little man bore up wonderfully well, all things considered, and, with the exception of one 'report' for some alleged breach of prison discipline, he had, up to the date of my discharge, a fairly good record. Unlike many

other well-to-do convicts, he gave little or no trouble to the prison officials, was a member of the prison choir, and a regular communicant. The four years which still lie between him and liberty are, of course, pregnant with unpleasant possibilities; but, looking squarely at his position to-day, one feels that he is much better off at Parkhurst Prison than he could possibly be at any other penal establishment in England. Looking over my notes on this distinguished criminal, I find the following entry:

'There are not, in the whole of Parkhurst to-day, two men once so intimately associated with each other who now present such diametrically opposite characteristics as Mr. Balfour and his colleague in crime, Mr. Granville Wright. The former is heavy, dull-looking, phlegmatic; the latter is slim, jovial, and full of mercury—a smart, dapper little business man.'

This description, as a rough snap-shot taken on the spot, conveys a fair impression of the two men as they appeared under the 'broad arrow.' Mr. Granville Wright has, I believe, through sheer dint of business capacity, got hold of the very best job in the prison. For some time after my arrival at Parkhurst he was in the printers' shop, which, by the way, is the haven where all literary lags would be. Owing to some embroglio (of which I never could measure the longitude or latitude) a life-sentenced prisoner, who had long been acting as a kind of schoolmaster's factotum, suddenly disappeared, and the vacancy thus created was immediately filled up by Granville Wright, who, I must

say, filled the post admirably—indeed, he might have been specially made for it.

I was one day having a quiet chat with another distinguished sinner (Dr. T.) about the long-promised Prison Bill (1898), when a little man, with his cap cocked rakishly on one side of his silvery head, and a heavy load of library books stuffed under each arm, crossed the yard in front of us. On inquiry I found that this smart but very heavily-laden mortal was none other than the former legal guide, philosopher, and friend of Mr. Jabez Balfour.

As everyone knows, Mr. Wright was undergoing twelve years' penal servitude, but as he was sentenced in 1894 (whereas Mr. Balfour was not condemned until two years later) and could earn the full remission of one-fourth of that sentence, he had little more than one year to remain in durance—a circumstance which may have had something to do with the light and breezy way in which he went about his duties. These duties were not very onerous, to be sure, but they were very important and needed a trustworthy man to discharge them faithfully. First of all, he superintended, under the schoolmasters, the distribution of the prisoners' library books; and although it has been said that he favoured his own class (the 'star' class) by letting them have the pick and choice of all new books, I do not think the complaint was well founded. Anyhow, with one or two exceptions, I seldom saw any unfairness in this way since Wright took over the job, whereas I had myself made several complaints to the governor and chaplain anent the care-

lessness of his predecessor in office—complaints which, I may say, *en passant*, were always investigated, and, where a real grievance existed, speedily redressed by the experienced and amiable governor Lieutenant-Colonel Plummer (all honour to a manly man and an efficient public servant!).

Then, again, Wright had practically the management of the 'clerical' department so far as it affected prisoners' letters, etc., and in this capacity he visited my den twice a week for a long time, and was therefore under the observation of a 'chiel' who was taking notes with the fullest intention of printing them. I am glad to be able to say that I always found Mr. Wright most attentive in those 'little things' which, after all, are big things to a man under lock and key, and therefore powerless to help himself. Mr. Wright was also a musical composer, and I have a shrewd suspicion that more than one of the fine anthems to which, on festive occasions, Parkhurstian 'society' was treated in the chapel, were the fruits of his musical talent.

The worst of it is that talent of any kind—unless, indeed, it be such as is inimical to the public weal—is not encouraged in an English convict prison, and whether the man be a genius or a booby, he will be discharged from the prison with the same inadequate and paltry amount of £ s. d. in his pocket. Like all other prisoners whose services may be of value, Wright received no remuneration for his varied help; it was a pure labour of love. Still, he enjoyed good health, was always in a bright and cheerful mood, and, unlike Mr. Balfour, was a

general favourite. Whether or not Wright and Balfour are on very friendly terms now, I cannot undertake to decide; but I have more than once noticed that, even when favourable opportunities for conversation presented themselves, neither seemed anxious to take advantage of them. Nay, more, although I have seen them stand side by side scores of times, I have never once seen any intercourse or familiarity between them; there was a marked absence of that spirit of *camaraderie* which is always to be found in a prison amongst men known to each other outside. Of course, *camaraderie*, or, indeed, any undue familiarity between one prisoner and another is not allowed by the regulations, but since it has long ago been demonstrated that the rule enforcing 'strict silence' is wholly impracticable, not to say inhuman, a certain latitude is necessarily allowed in cases where men are working in association.

CHAPTER XIX

A GREATER than Balfour was in Parkhurst in my time, and although I could seldom speak to him, I saw him daily for the best part of a year. I allude to a certain noble lord, who was then undergoing five years' penal servitude for fraud. As a first offender his lordship was in the 'star' class, and therefore was kept apart from ordinary convicts. From the first day of his imprisonment he was located in the infirmary and treated as an invalid, a fact which led to no end of hostile criticism from all those who, not enjoying such immunities, were ever ready to vent their spleen upon any prisoner living under better conditions than themselves. Owing to the quality of the water, perhaps, Parkhurst was more subject than any other prison I have ever been in to periodical attacks of influenza, and during one of these visitations I was myself prostrated by the accursed microbe, and lay in the hospital for nearly six weeks. When the fiend had, through careful medical treatment, been overcome, and I was allowed to leave my bed, I came across Lord *Z.* one morning as he was washing the stairs leading from one ward to another, and I was at once struck by the general appearance and superior air of that dis-

tinguished criminal, whose manners seemed to be marked by the 'repose' which Tennyson tells us 'stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.'

It may be interesting if I here reproduce some of the notes made at the time, which have since appeared in print. They are rough snap-shots, but they embody the impressions made upon my mind during the time I was in almost daily contact with his lordship:

Nearly fell over Lord *Z.* this morning, when passing from one ward to another. There he was, with his jacket off and his shirt-sleeves turned up, busily scrubbing away at the hall stairs. As I came upon him, he rose from his knees, and removing his pail of water to allow of my passing down, gave me a friendly nod and a half-suppressed 'Good-morning.' Returning the salutation, I went on my way rejoicing. I had seen one real live lord who was not above doing a little work. I have since seen this aristocratic prisoner manfully shouldering a pickaxe and shovel, and tackling some navvy work from which many of the quack gentry of the party turned away with a fastidious shrug. Being in the 'star' class, his lordship is cut off from association with ordinary convicts, but apart from the special treatment accorded to all prisoners under medical care, he was subject to the ordinary rules and regulations of the prison. This, however, did not save him from the rude comments and obscene jests which a certain type of criminal never fails to fire off at those in any respect superior to themselves. It may

appear incredible, but it is none the less a fact, that for some time it was as much as one could do to mitigate the rancorous hostility of ignorant and envious fellow-prisoners towards Lord *Z.* One ferocious fire-eater exclaimed one day in my hearing:

'Look, chaps, here is this d——d aristocrat fed up like a fighting-cock, and is not even asked to do a bit of hard work!'

Such is a fair specimen of the style of criticism (or, rather, abuse) flung at the head of an inoffensive and industrious prisoner, who, as I believe, enjoyed little or no immunities not shared in by other convicts whose condition made their admission to the hospital medically necessary. Unlike Mr. Balfour, Lord *Z.* was very popular with all the officials, and, so far as my observations went, he justly deserved the good name he held when I left the prison, which was but a few months previous to his own discharge.

Mr. Jabez Balfour's solicitor, also in Parkhurst at that time, undergoing, as I have said, twelve years' penal servitude in connection with the Liberator frauds, was a still more popular prisoner. I was brought into daily contact with him for a long time, and must say that I seldom saw a man who took such an interest in, or who tried more systematically to enliven the dull routine of prison work, than did this prisoner. What with his duties in connection with the library, choir, and the distribution and collection of prisoners' letters, he had a busy time of it in the chaplain's department. No prisoner

in Parkhurst worked harder or was more obliging than Mr. Granville Wright, and I often watched the smart little figure as it flitted hither and thither on some service to his fellow-sinners, and wondered how he wore such a light, breezy manner under his load of sufferings, which must have been a heavy one to a man of his nature.

Another remarkable convict then at the Isle of Wight was the man H., who, for some Stock Exchange transaction, was sentenced to five years. A few of the notes made about this prisoner I here reproduce:

A Hebrew of the Hebrews, and a regular attendant at the prison synagogue on each Saturday, H. is an arrant trickster; but clever as he is in financial affairs and in creating difficulties for all around him here, he seems to be totally incapable of learning the simple art of darning stockings. One idea appears to have obtained complete mastery over him. He was always hatching schemes which he hoped would eventually lead to his release from duress, and after a futile attempt in this direction he accosted me one day, and desired to know the sum of money which I thought would purchase his release. Of course, I doubted whether the Bank of England contained sufficient for that purpose, and I told him so. But he smartly replied: 'You are von fool! I vill buy my liberty mit £1,000.' Probably this man could afford to spend £1,000 in this or any other way, but his first attempt was not encouraging; he got into trouble with the authorities, and this frustration of his plans so upset him that before I left the prison I heard from another man that the

baffled financier intended to do away with himselff I doubted the report.

There were several other moneyed men (or men who could always obtain money when they required it) at Parkhurst, and, short of freedom, such men could —many of them did—buy anything in the shape of creature comforts they might take a liking to.

'What!' I can fancy some 'know-all' exclaiming —'what! Buy luxuries in an English prison? Where are they to buy them?'

Well, 'Mr. Know-all,' I am afraid you know very little about prison matters if you are ignorant of the fact that illicit commerce between warders and prisoners is a thing of daily occurrence in most prisons. At all events, it was to my knowledge a thing of almost daily occurrence at Parkhurst, and thereby hangs a tale, which I am not quite sure that the public interest does not demand a full narration of. But my hands are, in a manner, tied.

One notable case of trafficking came under my observation before I had been very long in the prison, and as the parties involved were subsequently dealt with at headquarters, the case does not admit of any question or scepticism. A very ingenious and clever financial agent, whose name appeared in the advertising columns of the principal newspapers a few years ago, was undergoing a sentence of four years' penal, and on arriving at Parkhurst was attached to a working party then in charge of one of the best-tempered and most considerate officers in the prison. One afternoon, on the prisoner's

cell being searched, some paper, pencil, or other contraband articles were found, and the man was immediately reported for what we may call 'illegal possession.' Prison officers are, more than prisoners themselves, liable to very severe penalties when detected in trafficking, and therefore it is to be expected that extraordinary precautions should be taken to avoid discovery, and, indeed, things are now done so cleverly that detection is next to impossible. In the case of this man, however, the whole thing was brought to light within twenty-four hours of the articles being discovered, and next day the good-natured officer in charge of his party was suspended from duty by the governor, who forwarded his report of the evidence before him to the authorities at Whitehall. That evidence must have been conclusive, as the Board adjudicated upon the case at once, and, while sentencing the prisoner to twenty-one days' punishment diet, and the forfeiture of class privileges and remission marks, dismissed the peccant officer from the service at once. If all the officers engaged in trafficking at that station were similarly dealt with the staff would, I fancy, be soon considerably reduced in number.

It was during the interval between the report on this case and the final settlement of it that I became acquainted with a man whose personal attractions were only equalled by the exceptional circumstances which led to his imprisonment.

I shall here give an extract from my notes made at the time in connection with this man, Charles B.:

The junior member of a firm of London solicitors,

he is a man of marked simplicity of manners, and it puzzled me much, when I first heard his case, how such an amiable and inoffensive mortal could have been guilty of the crime for which he is now under sentence of ten years' penal servitude, the more so that he is a man of some wealth. The whole thing has just been revealed. The firm became involved in some embroglio, and the Incorporated Law Society was about to take action, when, to save the reputation of the house, B. voluntarily assumed the character of a scape-goat, and was arrested on a charge of fraud, of which he persistently declares that he was innocent. There are often wheels within wheels in legal affairs, which render the solution of a problem or the elucidation of truth extremely difficult, and this appears to be the case here. B. was committed for trial, and whilst in Newgate Prison his partners came to see him and gave him an assurance that an arrangement had been made whereby the case would be placed on the Recorder's list, and that if he would plead guilty he would get off at once with a nominal punishment. This was agreed upon, and B. stood in the dock at the Old Bailey next day. But just as the case was called up the Recorder (the late Sir Charles Hall) said that an important civic function required his presence at the Guildhall, and that the case would go to No. 2 Court, where the Common Serjeant (Sir Forrest Fulton) presided. When called upon to plead before the latter judge, B. thought of asserting his innocence, but not wishing to compromise the firm, and still fancying that the same arrange-

He committed suicide by throwing himself from the top landing of 'A' Hall

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ments would hold in No. 2 as in No. 1 Court, he pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude by a judge who makes a point of coming down with the heavy hand upon fraudulent solicitors. Many efforts have been made to secure another hearing, but in the absence—the lamentable absence—of a court of criminal appeal such a thing is impossible, and B. now spends his weary days and years hoping against hope that some outside agencies may be pressed into his service, and that the Home Office will at last reconsider the case—a not at all likely contingency.

I think it was John Stuart Mill who said that if the most polished philosopher were placed upon a savage island and cut off from civilized influences for a number of years he would become a savage. I believe this to be perfectly true; but, true or not, I know how a long term of penal servitude, with its concomitant evils, affects most men, and I have now before me the case of one poor fellow who, having served seventeen years, was so troubled in mind that, when within but a comparatively short time of his release from prison, he committed suicide by throwing himself from the top landing of 'A' Hall. I have published a full account of this painful incident before, and need not here reproduce my notes upon it. In them I attributed the suicide to the man's experience of prison life, but on maturer reflection I think it was more likely due to the fear of facing the outside world, as he was an inoffensive man, who was never in trouble or punished.

The sad end of this man cast a gloom over the whole of 'A' Ward, where he was well known, and none took his tragic death to heart more than the accomplished and sympathetic governor of the prison (Lieutenant-Colonel H. Plummer), who, from the expression which I saw on his face that morning, was deeply moved by the occurrence.

I cannot conclude this account of my sojourn at Parkhurst without paying a passing tribute to the gentleman who then held the governorship of that important and very trying station. I have been under seventeen governors during my twenty-five years' detention in H.M. prisons, and with the exception of Captain Harvey (to whom I have referred in a former chapter) I have never known a prison governor who took one-half of the pains to induce the 'wicked man' to turn from his wickedness and do the thing that is lawful and right that I have known Colonel Plummer to take whilst governor of Parkhurst Prison. I believe, however, that Governor Plummer is very averse to anything like publicity being given to his voluntary labours on behalf of those in his charge—labours which I know were undertaken after what I might call 'official hours.' There were no 'official hours' with him. Throwing himself heartily into the work laid out for him, he was always ready to labour in the best interests of those above him, as well as of those officially beneath him. A fair idea of Colonel Plummer's activity and persevering efforts to reclaim the fallen may be gathered from the following extracts from the diary I have before referred to. The entry is in

connection with a murderous attack made upon one prisoner by another, which nearly ended fatally.

'Just met the dear old governor going over to the infirmary. He looks very ill and careworn. What a place this would be without him! One cannot bear to think of what might happen were that firm but gentle hand removed.

* * * * *

'Governor assiduous in his care for the sick here (the infirmary). Never saw a man work harder. Must have had personal interviews with at least two hundred men to-day, in addition to usual routine duties.

* * * * *

'Just heard that governor visited C. (a rather desperate character) last night, and was in his cell for nearly an hour when all the other officers had gone away. C. very tame this morning.'

* * * * *

To those who can read between the lines, the foregoing extracts will convey a rough idea of the reformatory work carried on by Governor Plummer in extra official hours, which I have reason to believe has reclaimed many men who could never have been influenced by the ordinary penal machinery.

On April 25 I was released on license, and sent up to Pentonville Prison for the purpose of making arrangements for my final discharge from custody. I had previously consented to join the Royal Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society at Charing Cross, but as I did not wish to be a burden upon that institution, I told the secretary (Colonel Buchanan) that

my programme was already mapped out, and that all I required from him was the small amount (26s.) which the Government allows to prisoners undergoing three years' penal servitude. That amount was handed over to me, and I straightway set about making up a home for my wife and child. But 26s. does not go very far, and I at once sallied forth to find employment.

CHAPTER XX

PREVIOUS to my release from H.M. prison, Parkhurst (on April 25, 1899), I intimated to the authorities my desire to join the Royal Society,* as I did not wish to go out into the world in the regulation suit supplied by the prison in lieu of my own clothes, which were, as usual, disposed of by the authorities on their own behalf after my sentence had been passed. Accordingly, on the 28th of that month—the actual date of my discharge from durance—I was brought from Pentonville Prison, where I had spent the interim, to the offices of this Society, and having been supplied with some slight refreshment, was fitted out with a suit of clothes, for the which I was informed that 3s. (superadded to the amount allowed by the Home Office, which should be ample enough for such material) would be charged, and as the full amount given to any prisoner under sentence of three years' penal servitude is only 26s., when I left those offices I had but 23s. wherewith to start life afresh, and, mark you, I had then a wife and child to support.

I was, however, in a far better condition than

* The usual question put to all prisoners before their release is: 'What society are you going to join?'

most prisoners who find themselves let loose upon society thus inadequately provided for, and when asked by the secretary (Lieutenant-Colonel Buchanan) what I was going to do, I assured him that I had no wish to be a burden upon the society, as I could see my way clear to get to work almost at once. I had, in fact, my programme already mapped out, and as I knew that he could not find suitable employment for me in my own line, I said that I should not trouble him about my prospects further.

Now, besides other motives of a more public character, I was influenced by an innate sense of the fitness of things to fall back upon my pen as a means of keeping the domestic pot boiling, and within a few days of my release I called upon Mr. F. Elmsly Carr (editor of the *News of the World*), who had previously known me, and submitted a proposal for a series of articles for his paper.

With the very kind consideration which I have always experienced at the hands of that gentleman, he accepted my proposal. He would take ten articles and pay me down, without waiting for publication, on presentation of the MSS.—nay, to make things easier for me, he would pay half the sum agreed upon when I produced half the copy. I went home with a heart swelling out with gratitude that day, pinned myself to the leg of the table, and went to work with such gusto that by the following Saturday morning I had completed half the work and brought it to the office of the paper, then in Whitefriars Street.

On inquiring for Mr. Carr, I found, to my dismay,

that he was out, and it was not known when he would be back. Well, everyone knows what *Saturday* means to those who live on their daily toil, and, so to say, 'from hand to mouth.' Situated as I then was, it was essentially necessary that I should meet the claims of landlord, baker, butcher, and other providers. I felt that I could not return to the bosom of my family without bringing the wherewithal to supply their needs.

I could have gone forth that day and had what I needed by illegitimate measures; but 'as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be'—I have *no love* for illegalities. Wherefore I bethought me of the only legitimate resource then open to me, and, making my way to the office of the Royal Society for *Assisting Discharged Prisoners*, I sent in a note to the secretary, in which, without mentioning any names, I gave him a clear view of the situation, and asked him to advance me 30s. (to meet current expenses) until I should be paid for my work, when the amount would be returned. I have a copy of that written application now, and would publish it here if space permitted.

I was ushered into the presence of the potent secretary, and informed that he could not do anything of the kind. 'If you give me a note from the editor of this paper—what paper is it, and what are you writing about?—saying that you are employed by him and will be paid your money next week, we may consider the circumstances of the case and help you a little; but we can do nothing without such written information.'

Now, it will be seen at once that the conditions here imposed were prohibitive—they could *not* be met by me. To get a note from Mr. Carr—or any other man—one must see him; my inability to do so was the very ground-work of my application, and none knew this better than the secretary of the 'Royal Society.' I told Lieutenant-Colonel Buchanan that, all things considered, he should not make this to me an impossible condition, a *sine quâ non*. But I might as well have tried to reason out matters with the brazen metal-plate on the front-door.

Happily, on going down Fleet Street on my way home, I thought I would make another call at the *News of the World* office, and, to my surprise and pleasure, I met Mr. Carr, who at once paid for the five articles, and sent me on my way rejoicing. But what if I had *not* met him?

Owing to the pressure on the space of almost every English publication in consequence of the war, I was completely crushed out of the literary market, and for a long time reduced to dire straits. I have an abundance of letters, etc., testifying to the efforts made to keep my head above water, so that I cannot blush very deeply for what ensued.

I was pressed very sorely for the small amount of 10s.—money due to an importunate widower—and not yet having had time to pull myself together, I was obliged to go abroad to hunt up that sum. Feeling sure what my fate would be at Charing Cross, I gave the Royal Society the go-by, and wrote a

short note to Mr. Wheatley. Armed with this note, I called upon the 'sage of Brooke Street,' and happened to meet with him on his doorstep. Unfortunately, he refused to help me, and I began to think there would be nothing for it but to return to prison.

CHAPTER XXI

FINDING that every door was closed against me, and that the Prisoners' Aid societies would not aid in any way, I embraced an offer made me by a London newspaper editor to furnish him with copy anent the working of the new Prison Act (1898). As I could not obtain the necessary data second hand (although I tried hard enough to do so), I made up my mind to acquire it in a direct way, and so 'qualified' for a fresh term of imprisonment.

It was necessary for my purpose that I should be sentenced to more than six months' imprisonment, and I committed myself in such a way as to insure such a sentence.

I paid my landlady with a fraudulent cheque for £5, which I wrote out, and took £2 in change from her. I then wrote to Scotland Yard informing the authorities of my crime, and stating that I would give myself up on such a date and at such a place, and made what provision I could for my wife and child. A detective was at the place appointed, and after a week's remand at Holloway I was brought before Mr. McConnell at the London County Sessions, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment with hard labour. That same night I was sent to Wormwood Scrubs Prison.

On my first arriving at 'the Scrubs' it was rather late in the evening; the day staff had all gone home, and only a few officers were to be seen in the neighbourhood of the reception wing. A few preliminary formalities, such as stripping, bathing, and exchanging one's civilian clothing for the prison garb having been gone through, I was medically examined, entered as 'fit' for 'No. 2' labour, and handed a pair of sheets, a pillow-slip, and a towel, the warder in charge, meanwhile, reading out part of the 'rules and regulations.' Those ceremonies over, I was taken to 'A' Hall, put into a cell, and told to make my bed, get into it, and go to sleep as soon as possible.

To get into bed is an easy matter, but to go to sleep is a different thing whilst an army of bugs, fleas, and other vile insects are attacking one; so throughout the whole of that first night I lay awake carrying on a futile struggle with the enemy. Although nearly fagged out, I was glad when daylight came and I could be 'up and doing.' After a long set-to with brooms, buckets, dusters, and other household utensils, breakfast (consisting of an eight-ounce loaf of fairly good bread and a pint of gruel) was served to each man as he stood at his cell-door. When their bodily needs had been met, their spiritual ones were next attended to, and at 8.45 a.m. the inmates were marched off to chapel. As I had not been fully admitted, I was not taken to chapel, but was again taken, with a number of others, to the reception wing for the completion of the initiatory rites and ceremonies.

Among those I met in the reception ward that morning was a young foreign nobleman, who, like myself, had received the sentence of twelve months, and a little incident occurred there which is well worth retailing. This young fellow spoke English, French, and Italian fairly well, and, in fact, had been overheard talking very freely on the previous night, but when called upon to answer the usual questions regarding the name and address of his wife, he was unwilling to furnish the necessary facts, and tried to plead ignorance of the English tongue.

Throwing out his arms in a pleading way, he exclaimed in the French language: 'I cannot speak English to-day.'

The officer, unable to understand French, looked confused, and I thereupon volunteered to interpret the French phrase. Finding that the young Italian set his face against disclosing the name and address of his wife, I suggested that he should pose as a bachelor, an idea which seemed to him inspired. Rising from his seat, he turned to me, and, almost in tears, cried out:

'Oui, mon ami, certainement, dites-lui que je ne suis pas marié.'

The warder, who did not understand the French language, seized upon the last word 'marié,' and replied:

'Mary? Mary what? And where does she live?'

There was no reply to these questions. The Florentine was obdurate, and, insisting that he was an unmarried man, was entered as such in the books.

A short time afterwards, as we were brought across to the offices, a lady entered the prison gate and demanded to see her husband. The lady was the wife of the supposed young bachelor.

One of the changes effected by the late Prison Act became apparent about this time. Previous to the passing of this Act, all prisoners were obliged to have their hair and whiskers cut on first entering the prison. This rule now affects only those sent into penal servitude. 'Local' or short-time prisoners are allowed to retain their locks and other hirsute adornments—a very commendable arrangement.

On getting back to my den I found my dinner lying on the table, and that meal consisted of three-quarters of a pint of pea-soup, eight ounces of potatoes, and a small loaf weighing about four ounces. I did not then know to what work I should be put, and as a prisoner's detention depends upon the number of marks earned, the character of the work given to him becomes a matter of almost Cabinet importance. Unlike many Cabinet questions, however, this one was soon settled. The dinner-tins had just been collected when a warder threw open my cell-door and ordered me to put my traps together and go down to the bottom landing, where, said he, 'you will soon be put into harness.' On reaching the shop the task-master put my name on the slate, located me in '23' cell, and set me to work on making mats. Before I had been at the work two months I made such progress that Warder L. placed me upon special work, and the eight marks

necessary to earn the full remission of sentence allowed by law was guaranteed to me.

After a month at the loom a strange thing befell me. As conversation between prisoners when at exercise in the yards was forbidden by the rules, I (who kept very much to myself) wished to avoid being involved in a charge of talking to other prisoners, and therefore asked the doctor to allow me to walk along a gravel path by myself. This favour was granted, and it was on this path that I met two of the strangest criminals I encountered during my whole twelve months' imprisonment.

One of those men was a *soi-disant* ex-Captain of the Royal Engineers. As I was walking along, a middle-aged individual met me, and with a smile and an inclination of the head said 'Good-morning, Twenty-three. How are you? It is all right along this path, and no one will take any notice of us.' Before many days had passed I became well acquainted with this gentleman's private affairs, and soon learned that he was a man of considerable means. Still, I had a certain doubt about him when I heard that he got his sentence for defrauding an hotel-keeper of the price of a meal or two. He was a betting man, and, addressing me one day, he said:

'I say, Twenty-three, I owe £10,000! How much do you owe?'

When I told him I only owed about £20 the 'Captain' exclaimed:

'Oh, you are no class whatever! A fellow is nowhere unless he owes a good sum. My time is up in March, and before the end of August I shall

have made over £20,000 on the turf by means of a new betting system which I am master of, and if you will join me I will pay you £10 per week and travelling expenses.'

'I know nothing of betting business. I never backed a horse in my life, so understand nothing about horses,' I replied.

'That will be all the better,' said the Captain. 'You are just the man for me. All you have to do is to introduce me to some bookmakers, get me their names and addresses, and I shall send you a £10 note to this prison to give you a start on your release.'

I made inquiries about this prisoner shortly afterwards, and learned from an officer that he was an impostor. As for the fortune, it was a perfect myth. He was rearrested at the prison gates, and sentenced to another term of imprisonment.

The second of the two personages mentioned above was a man named W., who, although a gentleman, and educated at Cambridge, was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for illegal pawning. The particulars of this man's case were extremely painful. He was an army tutor by profession, but owing to his deafness was obliged to abandon his vocation. To meet the necessities of the household his wife undertook the charge of children. Shortly afterwards two babies were found drowned in the Thames, and the police, who suspected Mrs. W., issued a warrant against her. After further inquiries W. was arrested, and both were committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court on the charge

of wilful murder. Some comments appeared in a London weekly paper which, like those of an editor who recently suffered a term of six weeks' imprisonment at Bristol, were said to have influenced the trial of this man and his wife. Anyhow, Mrs. W. was found guilty, and was subsequently hung at Newgate. The husband was acquitted by the jury, but was then rearrested on the charge mentioned above. Having served his eighteen months at 'the Scrubs,' W. now roams about London in a dazed condition, endeavouring to gather evidence in support of his contention that his wife was wrongfully convicted.

Within a week or two of my meeting with W. and the 'Captain' an incident occurred which, because of its importance, as well as of the side-light which it throws on the inner life of our prisons, should be allowed a chapter to itself, but as my space is now rather limited, I can only give a brief account of it. I had been six months in the prison when the old governor (Captain L.) retired, and his successor (late Governor of Leicester Gaol) took up the duties of administering the chief metropolitan prison. He was not long in office before he introduced some important changes—which he, no doubt, considered improvements—in the routine work of the establishment. One of these changes was that of ordering all prisoners to be stripped naked and bodily scrutinized on the occasion of the usual fortnightly search. Up to that time no prisoner was required to take off his under-flannel or pants, but was obliged to divest himself of every other article of clothing,

including socks, and then was 'rubbed down' by the officer. This was a process to which no objection could be raised by any prisoner, and was one which effectually answered all the purposes of the search without necessitating an indecent exposure.

One day, however, two officers entered my cell and ordered me to strip. I did as (up to that day) I had always done. I took off everything but vest and pants and handed them to one of the officers to search.

'This will not do now. You must take everything off,' said the senior warder.

'By whose authority do you make this demand?' replied I.

'Oh, never mind by whose authority. The order is that every prisoner must be stripped naked.'

I doubted the legality of this order, and, by way of justifying the position I then took up, I here give the authorized version of the rule relating to the searching of prisoners, or, rather, that section which directs how the search shall be made:

'RULE 5 (Section 2).—The searching of a prisoner shall be conducted with due regard to decency and self-respect, and in as seemly a manner as is consistent with the necessity of discovering any concealed article.'

How, in the face of such a rule, a well-behaved prisoner should have been required to strip literally naked, and submit to a critical scrutiny of his person by two other men, was a thing I could not understand, and, feeling that some practical protest should be made against it, I firmly but respectfully declined

to take off my underclothing. The warders might, of course, have torn the articles off, but the job was, I knew, a very disagreeable one to them, and they were, I fancy, rather pleased than otherwise that a stand should be made against the new order of the governor. Anyhow, the senior officer merely replied:

'Very well. I shall be obliged to report you tomorrow for disobedience of orders.'

Next morning I was brought down to the punishment cells, where I was visited by the medical officer, who inquired if I was 'all right.'

'Yes, doctor, thank you.'

'You don't appear to be so. What's the matter with you?'

I was certainly very much upset, and, being extremely nervous, I may have betrayed symptoms of mental disturbance. But not wishing to ride out of my difficulty on the doctor's shoulders, I assured him that I felt 'very well indeed.'

Within ten minutes thereafter I stood before the new governor, charged with refusing to strip when ordered to do so. Having heard the officer's statement, the governor asked me what I meant by disobeying the order. In as clear a way as my agitated mind would allow I tried to show that my disobedience was not the result of any refractory feelings, but was merely intended as a protest against what I felt to be a degrading and wholly unnecessary process.

The governor (Mr. Gibson) is a gentleman for whom I entertain the greatest possible respect. I

was under him when imprisoned at Leicester (as related in a former chapter), and I know him to be a very considerate official. When he heard all I had to say he replied: 'Whether the order is good or bad, it is *my* order, and must be obeyed. It is absurd to talk as you do. You would strip if a medical examination were necessary, and why not when a search is made? You will have two days' bread and water and the loss of eighty-four marks.'

The former part of this punishment was administered at once, and when I had got back to my cell and the dinners were served out I was handed a small six-ounce loaf of brown bread as my midday meal. It was about noon, and the officers had all gone home to their dinners, when, as I sat on my stool munching my loaf and reading Boswell's 'Life of Dr. Johnson,' I heard a shuffling of feet outside, and my cell-door was thrown open by the 'patrol,' who cried out: 'Stand against the wall. H.M. Inspector of Prisons.'

Presently a rather portly and elderly gentleman in grey came along, accompanied by a warder, who exclaimed: 'H.M. Inspector of Prisons. Anything to say?'

I was then ignorant of the gentleman's identity, but thought that I might make a statement which, without being offensive, would lead to an inquiry into the objectionable practice then revived after it had fallen into disuse years before. Had I known at the time that I was addressing Captain Harris, I certainly should not have wasted his time or mine

by what I should then have realized to be a useless representation. But I did not know, and when I had said all I thought was needful the inspector replied: 'Tut, tut! Men are not so delicate as all that, and I am sure the public would not hold with your views at all. If you don't obey orders you must put up with the consequences.' The cell-door was immediately shut, the inspector went on his rounds, and I returned to my crust and to 'Dr. Johnson.' Ten minutes later my cell-door was again opened, and a warder announced the 'visiting magistrate.' I at once made up my mind to appeal to a visitor, who, I knew, had a comparatively free hand, and could, within certain limits, influence the authorities at Whitehall. Standing to attention at my cell-door, I was addressed by a low-sized gentleman in black, who, with note-book and pencil in hand, desired to know whether or not I had any complaints to make. After the rebuff from the inspector I felt rather diffident at first, but the gentleman's manner was so conciliating, and he appeared to be so eager to hear what I had to say, that I told the whole story to him as I have here related it, and begged him to use his influence with the authorities to the end that a demoralizing practice should be discontinued.

The visiting magistrate made copious notes, and, turning to the principal warder who accompanied him on his rounds, he asked the name of the officer who had ordered me to strip. Addressing me, he then said: 'I have heard all you have to say, and I shall deal with the case.'

I was quite content with that, and would have left matters as they then stood, but later on that day I was visited by another official, who advised me to forward a petition to the Home Office on the subject of the search. This I did on the following day, and in due course I received the usual stereotyped reply—to wit: 'The Secretary of State has carefully examined your petition, but can find no grounds for granting your request.'

My request, however, *was* granted. Whether the result was brought about by the representations made in that petition, or (as I am more inclined to believe) by the influence brought to bear upon the Home Office by the visiting magistrate, I am unable to say. All I know is that, from the date of the search to the day of my release (four months later) I was never again required to strip naked.

Nothing of importance occurred between the date of the search and the date of my discharge, which, to my great joy, occurred on the morning of Saturday, August 3, 1901.

On that happy morning I was called into the general office and two documents were handed to me by the chief warder. One was a 'certificate' testifying to my good conduct whilst in the prison —a document which the governor is authorized, by Section 8 of the recent Act, to give to every prisoner whose conduct and industry have been good during his sentence.

The other document was a railway pass from Uxbridge to Bishop's Road Station—a penny fare

—and was supposed to be given up at the latter station.

As, however, I did not care to let even railway officials know that I had just been released from prison, I paid the fare and kept the document, which I have now in my possession.

CHAPTER XXII

A WELL-KNOWN divine once said that 'Those who have lived under peculiar circumstances for a number of years may be under the same obligation to publish the results of their experiences and observations as the explorer is to describe the countries through which he has passed.' I believe this to be sound doctrine, and having given an account of my long prison experiences, I feel it incumbent upon me to conclude my narrative by a brief summary of the impressions which those experiences have made.

First of all, then, I am quite convinced that the science of penology is of far higher importance than the English public imagine it to be. It affects a vital part of the body social. To employ an apposite metaphor, it (as a certain liver pill extensively advertised is said to do) 'touches the liver.' This being so, it is essentially necessary that attention should be called to the fact that, whilst every other department of the public service is represented by an official publication of some kind, the prison department alone is without an independent organ; and until this state of things be altered, and this hitherto dumb institution be enabled to articulate

a little and express its own needs and grievances, it is impossible that we should ever come within measurable distance of a rational penal code.

It has been more than once publicly asserted that the authorities at Whitehall, holding an autocratic power, and exercising a complete censorship over all official communications, are indifferent to the subject of prison reform, and think only of drawing their salaries. I believe this to be a libel on a body of gentlemen holding, perhaps, the most unpleasant and trying of all public offices, and I think it only fair to them that I should here state that I was last year invited by the present secretary of the Board of Convict Prison Directors (Major Clayton) to make any suggestions I thought proper in connection with prison administration and the treatment of crime. I regret to have to state that, as this invitation was not accompanied by any promise of remuneration for my work, and I was (like most other ex-convicts without private means) living a hand-to-mouth kind of life, I was then unable to act upon it. Thus the opportunity of making a few possibly useful suggestions was allowed to pass. I now avail myself of the opening which this work affords of stating, in plain Anglo-Saxon, the conclusions which a quarter of a century's experience of prison life has enabled me to arrive at.

That the barometer of crime is rapidly rising none who know anything about the matter will deny. Even the prison directors themselves admit this, and I am quite satisfied with their statistics, which go to show that there were 17,356 more com-

mittals this year than last year. Allowing for the many exceptional agencies at work during and since the South African War, this is plain: crime is *not decreasing;* and since the object of all penal machinery is not merely to punish the wicked man, but to lead him to depart from his wickedness, and do the thing that is lawful and right, if our penal system does not accomplish that object it is worse than useless.

My present purpose, however, is not to abuse the system or those who engineer it, but simply to point out where the recent attempt to improve it (Prison Act, 1898) may itself be improved.

If I were asked to indicate the first three things most urgently needed in our prison economy, I should say (1) the classification of prisoners; (2) the *classification* of prisoners; (3) the CLASSIFICATION of prisoners. *That* is the one thing needful. So long as the present 'gang' system obtains a force is at work which can produce but one result—viz., the manufacture of criminals. Every 'working party' in every prison in the country is an incubator, and produces, through the infallible law of cause and effect, a daily brood of criminal chickens.

As I may put it in rhyme:

'There's Jones and Brown (and here's the rub)
Associated in "the Scrub"
With Dick and Harry, Bill and Bob
(Men whose "profession" is to rob);
But as they all subsist by plunder,
They should (in "quad") be kept asunder.
They're now, however, mixed together,
And federate like birds of feather.

This is a fact (and not a fiction)
To which I challenge contradiction;
And proves, I think, to demonstration
That thieves are made by legislation.
In fact, our gaols—to end my rhyme—
But put a *premium* upon crime.'

The foregoing lines are very rough, but they express in a popular way the conviction of one who, having a thorough knowledge of the subject, can endorse the statement made by a late prison official in connection with the working of the prison system. Speaking at a meeting held in London last year, the Rev. W. D. Morrison (late chaplain of Wandsworth Prison) used these words:

'If you consult the opinion of almost all the most experienced writers, jurists, administrators, and statesmen among European communities, you will find all of them say, without exception, that our present methods of penal administration are, to all intents and purposes, a failure.'

The principal cause of the failure is, I believe, the absence of a scientific classification of prisoners—a classification based not, as at present, upon extraneous and accidental circumstances, but upon a moral and mental fibre, which, notwithstanding the apparent difficulty, could, I fancy, be speedily ascertained by attaching to every police-court an expert in moral and mental diseases. I am positively certain that one-half of the crime committed in this or any other country is the outcome of disease, and our present method of treating criminals is on all fours with the practice which was said to exist

in China, and which simply perpetuates this disease.

Emerson tells us that it was the custom in that country to put all suffering from small-pox into bed with others who were afflicted with the same disease. That is precisely how we deal with our criminals—we place them in 'gangs' or working parties, and the virus spreads. When we realize that moral depravity is a contagious disease we shall, no doubt, act differently. But at present we have but one idea, and that is to *punish* the wicked man. The backbone of our penal economy is *lex talionis*—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

In a multitude of councils wisdom may be found, or, to use a homely phrase, 'Two heads are better than one.' I have a clear conviction that the first step towards an effective penal system is *decentralization*. Give to each county in the country the power of solving the problem of crime in its own way, and a satisfactory result would, sooner or later, follow. The science of medicine is not what is called an 'exact' science, but it is so nearly so that the prescription of a duly qualified medical man may be relied upon, and this stage of efficiency has only been reached by persistent experiments. By a parity of reasoning, I humbly suggest that the safest and most effectual means of dealing with crime would be to enable each county to find its own remedy. Out of the number of experiments made an intelligible, if not a perfectly satisfactory, system would soon be evolved.

It is, I know, a very easy matter to point out the

defects in our prison system, and destructive criticism alone can never lead to any beneficial result. I therefore respectfully submit the following proposals, which I am quite sure the authorities will fairly consider, coming as they do from one who has had more than an ordinary experience, and who has no other purpose to serve than to suggest something that may be useful:

1. It is most desirable to eliminate the commercial element in the employment of convict labour. So long as the idea of making a prison self-supporting exists, it is impossible to prevent those evils which are inseparable from the promiscuous association of hardened criminals and amateurs in crime. To make a prison pay its own expenses sounds well, and looks well—on paper. But what prison in England pays its own expenses? I doubt whether any prison does so, and, even if it does, is it not through 'trading on our social ulcers—making profit out of crime?'

2. The military element is altogether too strong in our prisons. The morality of the mess-room is not an ideal one, and I have often thought that a barrack is a bad preparatory school for a civil institution which is supposed to be based upon reformatory principles. A higher scale of pay would secure a more suitable class of officials.

3. An opportunity should be given to every prisoner to start life afresh under favourable conditions. To this end public workshops might be established in every county under the auspices of the County Councils (to which, I think, the

management of our penal establishments should be handed over); or, failing that, a sufficient allowance should be made to a prisoner on release to enable him to keep his head above water until he should succeed in obtaining employment elsewhere.

The late chaplain of Dartmoor Prison has shown the necessity for some such arrangement.

'Men,' says he, 'come back, even to Dartmoor, over and over again, because they are not properly provided for on leaving the prison. If, instead of the paltry sum now doled out to them, they were to receive, say, £15 or £20 on their release, a fair start would be given to them, and we should not see one-half of them again.'

One is not ignorant of the fact that when, in the old days of deportation, discharged prisoners received such liberal allowances, many abused the liberality of the Government, and made that which was intended for their good an occasion of evil. But isolated instances of that kind do not furnish sufficient grounds for establishing a general rule. From my own personal experience I can say that if I had received £20 instead of 26s. (which is the *maximum* amount allowed to a prisoner who has served three years in a convict prison), I should have been in a very different position from that in which I am to-day.

4. The institution of 'mutual improvement' classes in our convict prisons would, I have reason to believe, have a beneficial effect upon very many who are now degenerating and being brutalized by their surroundings. Apart from the benefits which

such classes would confer upon the members, they would form a magnetic centre into which many otherwise unapproachable characters would be drawn. I am afraid that I have not stated the case as clearly as it might be stated, but what I mean is simply this: As vicious agencies abound in all prisons, and the general tendency is in the direction of evil, some counteracting influence is most desirable. This, I fancy, could be best supplied by establishing classes or guilds, where (under certain conditions) prisoners might meet, say for an hour nightly, for educational purposes. Some would, no doubt, abuse the privilege, but the majority would appreciate it, and the black sheep could soon be disposed of.

5. The old idea of a prison being a place where nothing should be found but weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth has long since been discarded, and it is now generally admitted that the *human* element should have a place in our penal economy. That is as it should be. You cannot flog men into righteousness, but you may draw them there by tender influences. Free intercourse with a parent, a wife, or a child, would produce a wonderful effect upon most men. Anyhow, it would save some, and if it be objected that such intercourse would disorganize present prison arrangements, I say that we are not necessarily wedded to present arrangements. Those who object to improvements because they are innovations may have to accept innovations which are far from being improvements.

6. I shall only make one more suggestion. As

a result of my observations in Pentonville and Wormwood Scrubs Prisons, I have come to the conclusion that instrumental music should be encouraged in all prisons. Why should there not be a prison band? I know that some may smile at this suggestion, and conjure up visions of criminal promenade concerts, etc. But if the object of imprisonment is to reform a man (and if it is not *that*, what is it?), no agency, however novel it may be, should be neglected; and after twenty-five years' experience and observation I am quite satisfied that the cultivation of a musical taste, or the creation of such a taste, would operate powerfully as a reforming agency.

CHAPTER XXIII

AMBIGUITY of expression would appear to be the besetting sin of the majority of those who are generally looked upon as being experts in criminology. One has to elbow his way through a crowd of metaphors and valueless verbosity before he can reach the 'platform' from which the speaker (or writer) addresses mankind on one of the most important of all social problems—the treatment of crime.

It has been stated that, 'in proportion to the degree in which a man understands his subject, so will the lucidity of his exposition be,' and this, I think, is a sound doctrine. At all events, it is sound as touching the science of penology—a science around which more conflicting views, opinions, and theories gather than one could conceive possible in the twentieth century. Like the late Prime Minister's description of the 'Concert of Europe,' prison reformers constitute an assemblage in which 'every performer is playing a different tune,' a remark, by the way, which reminds one of Emerson's dictum anent criminal penalties: 'The proper way to punish those who play *out* of tune is to teach them to play *in* tune.'

That our present methods of dealing with crime and criminals are, to all intents and purposes, a failure is generally admitted. Even the leading organ of the Government says:

'It is difficult to resist the impression, after reading the testimony of experts, that the present remedies in the shape of prisons are little better than quack remedies.'

Well, it would simplify matters if, instead of following the 'methods' of those who indulge in vague generalities, we were to pin ourselves down to facts, and fairly consider the latest attempt to deal with a very difficult problem. That attempt is embodied in the Prison Act of 1898, and by examining its salient points I fancy we can arrive at a just conclusion as to the ultimate results of a very prolonged and, no doubt, costly commission. This Act, which is catalogued as the '61 and 62 Vict., Cap. 41,' consists of sixteen sections, of which five only (Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) constitute what we might call a new departure. Taking them as they now stand, Section 2 ranks first, not only in order of time, but also in order of importance, as by virtue of it the whole machinery of penal administration is invested in, or handed over to, a single person—to wit, the Home Secretary.

Personally I have, after nearly thirty years' study of the subject under the most favourable conditions, long since come to the conclusion that the first step to be taken before we can hope to arrive within measurable distance of a rational prison system is decentralization. Given that, I am quite certain

that an intelligible and workable system could be found.

But we must take things as they are, and my present purpose is to show what this last legislative effort in the direction of criminal reform really amounts to.

Section 2 provides that 'the Secretary of State may make rules (in this Act called "prison rules") for the government of local prisons and convict prisons.'

There lies the essence and quintessence of this Act. It invests the Home Secretary, who may or may not have a competent knowledge of the subject, with supreme authority upon all prison matters, and, of course, thereby hangs the tale. In only one particular does this Act hold the hand of the Home Secretary, and that is by the restrictions imposed in connection with the flogging of prisoners.

Section 5 enacts that 'prison rules shall not authorize the infliction of corporal punishment except,' etc.

In connection with this clause I lately heard a highly respected prison governor say that it 'crippled the executive authority' (the men who are really responsible, as being on the spot) in the management of the prison.

The 'cat' or 'birch' is not a 'likely' agent in reforming criminals, but my experience proves that it would be impossible to govern a prison if the power to use this kind of argument—the only one to which some are amenable—was abolished; and if the thing were put to the vote I am fully convinced that

the great majority of prison officials would say that the clause in the recent Act, which now makes it compulsory to obtain the sanction of a Minister (who, not being on the spot, knows nothing practically of the situation) before the only effective argument can be employed, simply puts a premium upon acts of violence. When the cat is out the mouse will have its own way.

Section 6 deals with the division of prisoners, and creates a new 'class' into which certain prisoners are to be put.

Well, the classification of prisoners is the old standing grievance, against which those who know most of the inner life of our prisons have raised up their voices over and over again. But no one can read the terms of this section without feeling that the basis upon which the classification here established rests is an artificial one only. In this connection I may as well state here that the strongest indictment against our prison system has been formulated in clear terms by the person most responsible for its existence.

Sir Edmund Du Cane has distinctly stated that 'our present prison system imposes upon all under it an artificial state of existence, contrary to that which nature has set up as the condition of moral, mental, and physical health.' So long as the present mode of 'classifying' prisoners exists, it is impossible to separate the sheep from the goats. All are huddled up promiscuously and the *virus will work its way*. 'He who hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

Section 8 refers to 'remission' of portion of sen-

tence, and applies to local gaols the provision which has been applicable to convict prisons since 1864. Hitherto a man sentenced to a term of imprisonment had to work out every day of that sentence in prison. Under the new Act he can now obtain a remission of one-fourth of the said sentence, providing (as the phrase goes) that 'his conduct and industry have been good.'

The odd thing about this new arrangement is that it is inoperative until the prisoner shall have completed six months of his sentence. So that those sentenced to any term less than six months are excluded from the benefit accruing from this section; and as the majority of those committed from police courts daily are sentenced to terms ranging from seven days to six months, this new arrangement does not affect them at all.

Section 9 refers to prisoners committed for non-payment of debts, and stipulates that on a payment of some portion of such debts 'the term of imprisonment shall be reduced by a number of days, bearing, as nearly as possible, the same proportion to the total number of days for which the prisoner is sentenced as the sum so paid bears to the sum for which he is so liable.'

The phraseology of parliamentary enactments is often confusing, and does not always convey a clear idea of what is meant. But this is clear enough: If a prisoner is committed for, say, 20s., he need not remain in prison for the full term for which he has been committed, but may be released on payment of one-half of that sum when one-half of the term of

imprisonment has expired. This is a humane provision, and works well all round. I wish it were possible to give as hearty an approval to every other clause of this Act, but, unfortunately, I cannot honestly do so.

To cite one instance only. Prior to the passing of this Act, direct intercommunication between prisoners was not permitted, and although it is impossible to abolish the evils arising from such intercommunication, still, by prohibiting intercourse and making it penal, those evils were minimized. Now, however, the flood-gates are periodically opened, and (after some considerable observation), I am obliged to say, with disastrous results.

Rule 77 enacts that 'The privilege of talking may be given after a certain period, as a reward for good conduct, on certain days for a limited time, etc.'

It may appear harsh to advocate the suppression of mutual intercourse between men or women who are under a cloud, but when, as is now allowed under this Act, all sorts and conditions of men are permitted to exercise together in the yards, and, selecting their own companions, converse as freely as though they were in a tap-room, what can be expected but contamination ?

It is a clear case of the *Aqua Claudia* and *Cloaca Maxima* over again. Knowing, as I do, the results of this legalized intercourse, I cannot resist the impression that it is a mistake. The chaplain of Dartmoor Prison must have felt this when he wrote these lines :

'I can conscientiously say that we have done all

we possibly could, spiritually and morally, for our prisoners, but the results are not of a very encouraging nature.

'Many seem to have given themselves up entirely to the powers of evil, and are incredibly callous; even the better-behaved class of prisoners speak of their wickedness in an appalling manner. Impervious themselves to all good influences, *they should at least be prevented from contaminating others.*'

Of course, there is nothing against which some objection may not be raised, and one has no desire to be hypercritical in examining a measure which was well meant, and which, moreover, introduces some real improvements. But no good purpose can be served by blinking facts, and the sooner some modification of the present regulations affecting intercourse amongst prisoners is made the better, not only in the interest of the public, but in the interest of the prison service and of prisoners themselves.

A late high official in the prison service has expressed, in very plain language, the conviction of all who have seriously studied the subject of criminal reform. His words are so weighty and apposite that I shall not offer any apology for introducing them here in full.

'If,' said the reverend chaplain of Wandsworth Prison, 'the object of imprisonment is to protect society, and to prevent the offender from returning to prison, you must not subject the prisoner at every turn to meaningless and unnecessary degradation. He is, as a rule, degraded enough before he enters

the prison cell, and certainly, if you want to reform him, you will not attain your purpose by subjecting him to the operations of a code of regulations which are calculated to extinguish every spark of humanity he may happen to possess.'

This is strong enough, but something stronger still comes from another and a very different quarter. Sir Godfrey Lushington (the late Under-Secretary of State) publicly declared that he regarded 'as unfavourable to reformation the status of a prisoner throughout his whole career; the crushing of self-respect, the starving of all moral instinct, the absence of all opportunity to do or receive a kindness, the continual association with none but criminals, the forced labour, the denial of all liberty. I believe that the true mode of reforming a man or restoring him to society lies in the very opposite direction to all these.'

In face of such testimony as this it is impossible to suppose that the recent Prison Act, admirable as it is in many respects, has brought us nearer finality in connection with the greatest social problem of to-day—that of the proper treatment of crime—than we were before the passing of the Act of 1898.

CHAPTER XXIV

EVERYONE has, I suppose, heard of the Australian 'Prison Bard,' and his effusions—which I have never had an opportunity of reading—would appear to have some kind of merit, as extracts from them have been reproduced in several high-class magazines and journals.

I cannot pretend to rival my Australian 'brother in distress,' but I give in this chapter some of the fugitive lines which I composed at various times in prison. I do not call them poetry, but they may interest some of my readers.

THE 'THIEVES' CERTIFICATE'

'A prisoner under more than six months' imprisonment may (when he has completed six months of his sentence), by special industry and good conduct, earn a remission of one-fourth of the remainder of said sentence; and, on his release, the governor shall give him a certificate, showing that he has been discharged under Section 8 of the Prison Act, 1898.'—*Vide* Standing Order, Home Office 'Prison Regulations,' 1899.

Twenty-five Years in Seventeen Prisons

Air: 'THE WEARING O' THE GREEN'

Oh, Billy, have you heard the news that's lately
going round?
The Government a remedy for all our ills have
found.
They're going to abolish crime and save us 'repro-
bates'
By making us a present of some new 'certificates.'

The peer may wear his 'garter' and the Commoner
his 'cross,'
For 'stars' or 'ribbons' (red or blue) I do not care
a toss;
What are 'diplomas' and 'degrees,' or honours of
the great
Compared with our distinguished badge—the thieves'
certificate?

No longer need we trudge the town a-looking for a job,
No longer go out on the mooch to see whom we can
rob,
No longer beg, no longer starve, but live in splendid
state;
We have a mine of riches in our new certificate.

Should any bloomin' copper, as he tramps along his
beat,
Presume to look askance at you as you go through
the street,
Just stand upon your dignity, and should he dare to
prate,
Give him a wipe across the mug with your certificate.

And if, through choice or accident, you're brought
before ' the beak,'
If he tries on that ancient dodge—' Remanded for a
week '—
Say ' Half a mo', old cocky, you're too precipitate,'
Then hand him, with your compliments, the new
certificate.

'Tis true, the brutish public don't yet esteem this
prize.
One beggar whom I took it to began to curse his
eyes!
Another booby clenched his fist, and shook his
empty pate—
Told me to go to Jericho with my certificate.

But surely all this ignorance will be dispelled in
time,
For ain't this glorious document meant to abolish
crime?
Ain't it to lift us ' criminals ' from out our sunken
state?
Oh, let us all be thankful for this new certificate!

God bless the King! God bless the Queen! God bless
the Duke of York!
We'll dine no more with wooden spoons, but with a
knife and fork.
God bless the recent Prison Act—especially ' Section
Eight,'
Which gave us our great Bill of Rights—the thieves'
certificate!

'Social Outcasts'

'The fortifications at Portsmouth are the result of convict labour, the work having been done exclusively by prisoners. In employing these social outcasts in this way there is a saving of £5,000 per annum (over and above their keep), so that the use of convict labour in this way is both profitable and convenient.'—See article 'Portsmouth,' by Mr. Clowes, in 'Cities of the World' (Cassell and Co., 1898).

Metre: 'Locksley Hall'

Easy flows the flood of feeling when the cry of wrong ascends,
If the object of the passion can be numbered midst our friends.

Easy still, and still more easy, if another hemisphere
Stands between us and the victim over whom we drop the tear.

Distance truly lends enchantment to the ill that's far away,
And our sympathies are certain for a sorrow in Cathay.

Our philanthropy is vagrant, loves in quest of griefs to roam;
But alas, how oft it happens, 'Love abroad is spite at home'!

Twenty-five Years

Say, ye philanthropic nomads, why continue to explore
Every hedge and ditch in Europe for the thing that's at your door ?

Here, in ' free and happy Britain '—not in Egypt or Cathay—
Thousands, brother-men, lie smitten, wearing hapless lives away.

Here they toil with none to love them—the whole head and heart is sick—
Whilst tyrant Mammon stands above them crushing out the ' tale of brick.'

In the sacred name of ' Justice,' base ' contractors ' grind to time,
Trading on our social ulcers, making profit out of crime.

Who amongst us cares to hear it ? who amongst us dares to grieve ?
Ah, the poor delusive fancy ! Ah, the wretched make-believe !

How, ye philanthropic dreamers—how can you close your eyes ?
See these interested schemers gloating o'er their merchandise !

Net ' Five thousand pounds per annum, over and above their keep ';
' Profitable and convenient '—if the angels did not weep.

Labour on, ye 'social outcasts'! Blood and tears
make good cement,
Making of a nation's bulwarks but a penal monu-
ment!

Through the mist and fogs surrounding I behold
the rising sun,
And the light of truth abounding shows your work
is nearly done.

Iron justice has a limit. Love moves in a larger
sphere.
And I see the gaols and gibbets vanish with the
passing year.

'ASSISTANT-WARDER WADDLE'

Whilst 'Tommy Atkins' has his 'ode,'
Jack Tar his panegyric,
And e'en 'the bobby' on his beat
Is not without his lyric,
The prison warder stands alone
(In anything but glory);
No voice is raised to chant his praise
Or tell his wondrous story.

But, now, this long-neglected flower,
This Downing Street chrysanth'um,
Shall go down to the latest hour
Embalmed in cell-made anthem.
A plague on lays of meaner men—
All tommyrot and twaddle—
Here's to the theme t' inspire a pen—
Assistant-Warder Waddle.

Twenty-five Years

A lanky form, an awkward gait,
A ' dial ' past describing,
His upper works (*i.e.*, his pate)
Half-crazed by long imbibing,
His speech and manners indicate
An utter lack of breeding,
And as for ' tastes,' he has but one—
'Tis close allied to feeding.

Originally in ' the force '
(In uniform quite ' nobby ')
He took to *lying*, which, of course,
Is nothing in a ' bobby.'
He ran amuck against his ' chief,'
Maligned Inspector Jervis,
And, to ' the force's ' great relief,
Was soon expelled the service.

Reduced to many an awkward strait,
To find another living,
He took to thieving—stole some ' plate '—
By ' *kleptomania* ' driven (?).
The deed committed, off he ran
To damp his wonted fire,
When, lo ! he met the prison van,
Ill-favoured ' Black Maria.'

This sight to any other mind
Would not afford much pleasure.
It savoured of the man behind,*
And—too much anxious ' leisure.'

* The prison-warder.

in Seventeen Prisons

To Waddle it spelt clean release
From present grave disorder.
He now would hocus the police
By being a prison warder.

This stroke of genius once conceived,
He made his application,
Went to Whitehall, was well received,
And—got the situation.
Don't ask how he could qualify
For such a grave position ;
It only needs that one can lie
And be of ill condition.

Oh, prison service ! home select
Of highly premiumed vices,
Which knave and fool alike affect
When things have reached a crisis !
How readily it welcomes all
Who show the least intention
To offer incense at Whitehall—
In lieu of place and pension !

Our ' hero '—safe from legal scourge
And sure of daily mutton—
Now struts about in suit of serge,
Bedizened with brass button.
But, just as some declaim at sin—
Themselves the greatest sinners—
So he delights to run thieves in,
And rob them of their dinners.

Twenty-five Years

This servile office ever suits
A churl of his condition ;
Helps him to lick the governor's boots—
The height of his ambition—
To grovel daily in the mud
Before official betters,
And then to suck the very blood
From some poor wretch in fetters.

With one eye fastened on his ' chief,'
The other on his victim,
It brings his mangy soul relief
To think how well he licked him.
Compound of tyrant and of sneak,
Of sycophant and brute, he
Salutes the strong, grinds down the weak,
And calls it ' doing duty.'

Oh ' duty '—persecuted word !—
How oft my gorge has risen
When I thy holy name have heard
Perverted in a prison.
Like ' love,' ' religion,' ' nature,' ' truth,'
Thou'rt tortured, strained, and twisted
To back the greatest fraud, forsooth,
That ever yet existed.

But, stay, I wander from my theme—
My source of inspiration—
On which one might indite a ream
Of deathless lucubration.

in Seventeen Prisons

Lift up your drooping heads, ye ' screws '
(By head I mean your noddle)
And toast the hero of my muse—
' Assistant-Warder Waddle.'

THE END

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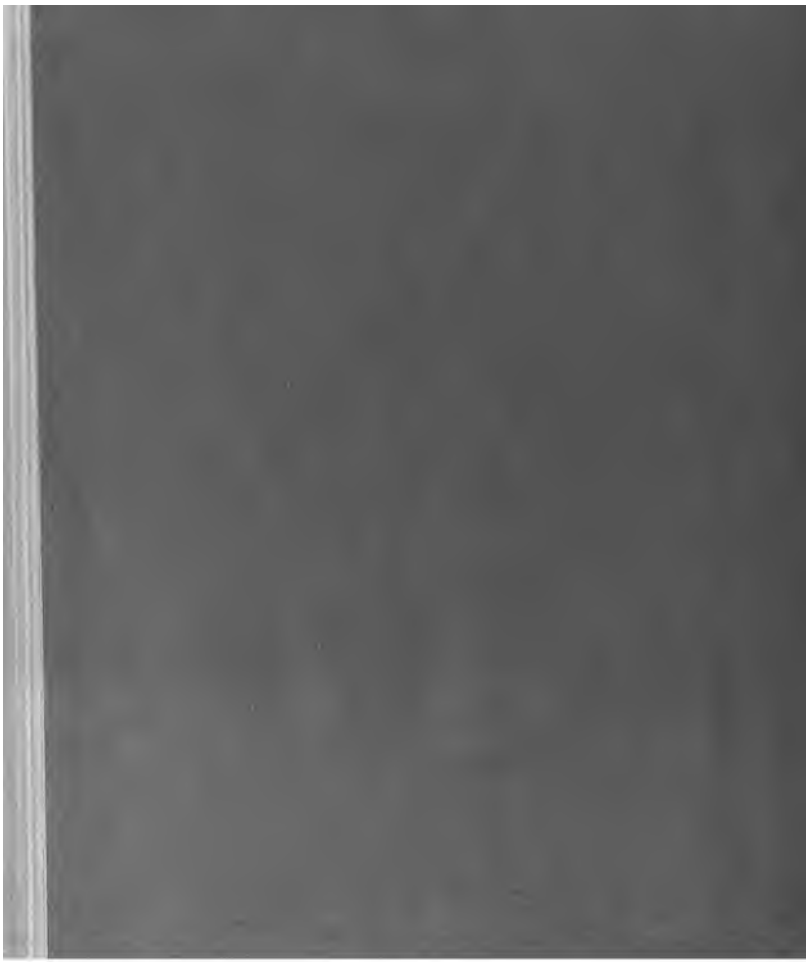
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